

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE COLLEGE
INDUSTRIAL SERIES



DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

THE
PENNSYLVANIA STATE COLLEGE
INDUSTRIAL SERIES

BRENEMAN • *Mathematics*

BRENEMAN • *Mechanics*

BRENEMAN • *Strength of Materials*

SCHAEFER • *Safety Supervision*

SCHAEFER AND WISSLER • *Industrial
Supervision—Organization*

SCHAEFER AND WISSLER • *Industrial
Supervision—Controls*

THAYER • *Blue Print Reading and
Sketching*

WALTON • *Do You Want to Be a Fore-
man?*

WALTON • *The Fundamentals of Indus-
trial Psychology*

INDUSTRIAL SERIES

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

BY

ALBERT WALTON

*Associate Professor of Psychology
The Pennsylvania State College*

McGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY, INC.

NEW YORK AND LONDON

1941

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

COPYRIGHT, 1941, BY
MCGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY, INC.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*All rights reserved. This book, or
parts thereof, may not be reproduced
in any form without permission of
the publishers.*

Second printing

PREFACE

This is not a scientific treatise on the subject of qualifying for foremanship nor is it a textbook for class use. It is an assembly of some of the ideas that the author has acquired in the process of living sixty-three years, of which twenty-five have been spent as an engineer, ten as a psychologist. All the reader will find here is some brief chapters that may stimulate him to do some thinking on his own part along the lines that the chapters suggest. If the book does not do this for him it will not be worth either his time or his money. If it does arouse some original thought processes the book will have much or little value in proportion to the practical uses to which the thoughts are put.

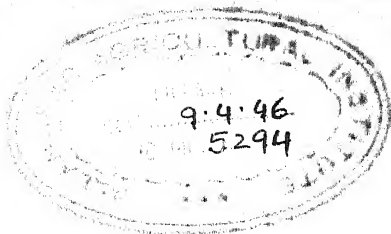
I hope the book will not be found entertaining. I hope it will be found a bit disturbing, even, perhaps, a mite annoying. If, as you read it, you find it has some such effect on you, you may be fairly well assured that it is because there are some things contained in it that it is good for you to hear and to have to meet and to take a definite stand upon. It is more comfortable to ignore some of these things, but it is more profitable to face them, recognize them as problems of your own, and settle once and for all

PREFACE

what type of adjustment you are going to make to them. It is not what I have written but what you do with it that will determine whether this book has value to you or is worthless.

ALBERT WALTON.

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE COLLEGE,
October, 1941.



CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
FOREWORD	ix
CHAPTER	
1. DO YOU REALLY WANT PROMOTION?	1
2. PUT YOURSELF IN THE BOSS'S SHOES FOR A MOMENT	14
3. TAKE A PERSONAL INVENTORY	19
4. HAVE A PROGRAM FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT	26
5. FACING THE FACTS	34
6. COOPERATE	40
7. SEEING PROBLEMS	45
8. OUTGROW YOUR JOB	54
9. A ONE-LEGGED STOOL	62
10. IT IS THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT	70
11. APTITUDES, ABILITIES, AND HABITS	79
12. INTERESTING THE WORKER	87
13. SELECTION AND TRAINING	95
14. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY	104
15. MERIT RATING	112

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
16. LABOR TURNOVER	120
17. ORGANIZATION	128
18. PLANNING	136
19. GRIEVANCES	145
20. LEADERSHIP	154
INDEX	163

FOREWORD

For many years The Pennsylvania State College has been carrying on work in foreman training in the industries of Pennsylvania. For the last two years, considerable attention has been given to the selection and training of prospective supervisors in preforemanship training courses. The first experimental groups in preforemanship were planned and conducted by V. G. Schaefer and J. G. Matthews of The Pennsylvania State College Extension staff. This work was watched with considerable interest by management of various industries. The course was then further developed by the above-named men and Albert Walton and W. J. Coppock and offered in several companies in the state of Pennsylvania. Later it was included as one of the courses offered in the engineering defense training program for the purpose of developing production supervisors in defense industries.

In the early stages these courses were presented as conferences in which mimeographed outlines and pamphlets were used as reference material. There is still a place for the discussion outlines that can be revised and kept up to date on the latest development in industry. There is also a need for a volume

FOREWORD

that presents the inspirational side of supervision and at the same time points out the general duties and responsibilities of the supervisor in an industrial organization. It is felt that just such a presentation is made in this book. The volume is the outgrowth of the author's long experience in industry and his experience in teaching and training supervisors in industry as a member of the staff of The Pennsylvania State College Extension Services.

It is the purpose of this volume to present the general picture of supervision to those who aspire to and may qualify for industrial leadership. Supplemented by the specific instruction outlines of the discussion leader, the volume should prove of much value in orienting the prospective supervisor.

This is one book in the series of volumes written by the staff of The Pennsylvania State College for use in adult groups in industry. It is written to fulfill the needs of those who attend such groups while actively engaged in industry. It is a very readable discussion of the practical principles of industrial supervisory problems.

H. G. PYLE, SUPERVISOR,
INFORMAL INSTRUCTION DIVISION.

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE COLLEGE,
October, 1941.

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

CHAPTER 1

DO YOU REALLY WANT PROMOTION?

When the United States became involved in the World War of 1914-1918, it found itself faced with the stupendous task of trying to fit a million and a half unknown men into the various jobs and positions that make up the army organization. Some of these men were going to have to be captains, some lieutenants, sergeants, corporals, cooks, buglers, company clerks, and truck drivers, and some were going to do nothing but push hand trucks around warehouses. Obviously it takes more mentality to be a captain or a top sergeant than it does to trundle bales around a storehouse floor. Something had to be done, and done quickly, to separate the men according to their capacities for leadership. They wanted to make sure they did not waste any top sergeants by assigning them to the lowly jobs of manual labor. That would mean a failure to develop the man to his most useful limits at a time when all the talent procurable was going to be vitally necessary. To let a man capable of being an officer spend his time as a railroad laborer would be an un-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

desirable misfit, but it would not have been so bad as the reverse situation. It might be fatal to a squad, a platoon, or a company, to assign as their leader a man who did not have "what it takes" and whose proper level in the organization would be as motive power for a wheelbarrow with somebody to tell him where and when to propel it. So they got up a now famous "intelligence test" which quite satisfactorily measured at least a few of the traits that go to make up whatever "intelligence" is—that something that the officer is going to need more of than is the private.

When the tests were first devised and put into use it was taken more or less for granted that any man who could qualify for the job of top sergeant would be overjoyed to do so because of the prestige the place carried and because the sergeant's pay for a week was more than that of a private for a month. Undoubtedly the first groups of men to go through the test ordeal did perform about as well as they knew how. It was a sort of game, and everybody tried for as high a score as he could get. Later, when it became evident that officers and noncommissioned officers were being appointed from the high-scoring men a new development entered into the situation. Some men who knew all the answers deliberately marked the wrong responses and so made very low scores. They did not want to be officers. They did not think that the rank and the pay that goes with it would compensate them for the added responsibilities involved. There are advantages, strange as

DO YOU REALLY WANT PROMOTION?

it may seem, in being merely a lowly "doughboy" private. He does not have to worry about keeping his squad or his company in good trim and submissive to his orders. He does not have to think of anybody but himself when in camp or in action. He is not worried by having to make fateful decisions on which the welfare of others may depend. He does not have hated "paper work" to do, reports to fill out, and records to keep. His responsibilities are few and simple, and even these are prescribed from above without any need for the exercise of free choice on his part. Undoubtedly there are times when the top sergeant envies the carefree private.

Not everybody craves responsibility. It is hard for the ambitious man who strains every nerve to "get ahead" to realize that there are intelligent men working for him who do not envy him for his position of authority, his greater pay, his closer contact with the men higher up. In industry, as in the army, it is more or less taken for granted that every man would welcome promotion. The facts of the case are far otherwise. Desire for advancement to a position of authority and responsibility is much less common than is generally supposed. Let us briefly examine as a demonstration of this the attitude of some of the men in an industrial plant who have served long years at the machine and have become complete masters of their jobs but have never accepted opportunities for promotion.

One of the most frequent motives for remaining in the ranks is prudence. The man regards the fore-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

man's job as too exposed. He knows that lightning tends to strike the parts of a building that project above the general level. It may be attractive when the weather is fair, but when storms come there is a feeling of security in not being too conspicuous. Modern slang expresses the feeling in the phrase "sticking your neck out." Sticking out the neck is closely associated in their minds with beheading. It is an invitation to destruction. In the course of their experience such cautious men have seen their comrades advanced to responsible jobs that were a little above their capacity and have observed that few such men are given the opportunity to return to the lower level again, and fewer still care to do so if it involves going back to the same group they were with before they were promoted. These men grow to regard promotion as a risky business and learn to avoid it as they would any other hazard.

Such avoidance is based largely on fear. It is a fear of the unknown. They know their present jobs from A to Z and feel as much at ease there as they do in their living rooms in their own homes. But they do not know all they would like to know either about their own qualifications for the supervisory job or about the supervisory job itself. They would answer Hamlet's question for him by saying it is better to bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of.

There is another factor that often decides the question for a man and makes him prefer to remain at the machine rather than take a promotion. Some

DO YOU REALLY WANT PROMOTION?

men are out-turned, "extravert," in their personalities, and others are in-turned or "introvert." The introvert prefers to work with machines rather than people. He would rather be turning out a piece of work accurate to the half of a ten-thousandth than to be trying to induce others to do it for him. He would rather be pursuing a problem in a research laboratory than directing the work of others. He rarely joins the Kiwanis Club or the Rotary Club, but if he is persuaded to do so he seldom attends because he does not get much pleasure from general social contact with his fellow man. It is hard for him to slap the other fellow on the back and call him by his first name until he has known him for eight or ten years. The extravert can do this with gusto the first time he meets you.

The introvert is not necessarily a Caspar Milque-toast. He merely prefers things to people. Most engineers are introvert and prefer running a slide rule to running a gang of men. It is a matter of likes and dislikes and not a matter of the intelligence. It is not a matter of self-confidence but of the feelings. I have seen it in the man who prefers the solitary job of patrolling the high line to the more social one of working with the gang on repair work. I have seen it in the professor of dipterology who preferred poring over his rare specimens of flies to being honored at a banquet for the knowledge he had of the science and the contributions he had made to it. These are introverts. An introvert might make an excellent foreman or supervisor, but he would not be a

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

leader in the sense of inspiring his men to follow him through thick and thin. He would be rather a director and planner of the work of others, getting that work done more by use of reason and explanation than by enthusiasm or loyalty, inspiring respect perhaps, but not affection. Ordinarily he does not even care for the job and so remains satisfied with his machine, his laboratory, or his slide rule.

Another of the reasons for not wanting to be a foreman is the item of worry. Many a man says he would prefer to be able to leave his job within the four walls of the shop when he goes home at night to his wife and family. He knows that with responsibility goes a certain amount of anxiety. He knows the superintendent is often at work long after the plant closes for the day and on many a Saturday and Sunday when the worker is at the ball game or driving his car out into the country for a picnic—and there is no overtime paid for that sort of work. It is worry work, work that a man does for fear something may go wrong if he does not do it. The man who prefers to avoid this sort of thing points out that happiness and pay seem to have little relation. Some men with little pay are happy in their homes and at their work, and some poor men are miserable. Some men with unlimited incomes are apparently happy, and some commit suicide. Neither more money nor greater social prestige seems to have a great deal to do with happiness, so why worry about promotion and increased pay? This may be a real reason, or it may be merely an

DO YOU REALLY WANT PROMOTION?

"alibi." The only way to find out which it is would be to offer the man the promotion and the higher pay and watch his response. If he takes the increase it was merely an alibi. "Sour grapes" are those we think we cannot reach.

One reason, though it may be shortsighted, is a fairly legitimate excuse for not desiring promotion. Sometimes the foreman does not make as much money in a week as does the man whose work he supervises. I have met foremen in a large manufacturing corporation who have told me that the men on the boring mill and on some of the larger engine lathes were making more money than the best paid of these foremen. The reason the foremen were not disgruntled was that they regarded the situation as a temporary one due to overtime work during a rush period. Just at that time the pay for a week was in favor of the worker, but measured by the year the foreman would be ahead. But when a worker sees that at times he actually makes more money than his boss one does not wonder that he has no desire to try for the promotion. Why sacrifice peace of mind and assume duties and responsibilities if he not only does not make more money by the change but actually loses by it?

In all these and many similar reasons or excuses for not trying for a supervisory job it is difficult to tell which reasons are real and will stand scrutiny and which are "alibis" for fear, laziness, and complacency. The "path of least resistance" does not lead to promotion. In fact it does not lead any-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

where. The path of least resistance, like the treadmill, leaves you right where you started. If that is a satisfactory place to be left, then the path of least resistance is the one to take. Staying where we are and liking it is the essence of complacency. In some ways it is a state of mind much to be desired, and the person who maintains it is one to be envied. One trouble with it is that the complacency of today may brew the dissatisfaction of tomorrow. We must make sure that the complacency we defend today is one that will endure. Otherwise we may find in later years that our complacency is lost in the feeling that we might have done better for ourselves and our families if we had been less self-satisfied in the years that have gone. If we can be sure that we shall never be haunted by the feeling of having missed the bus I think we can say that complacency and the easy road are the best means to happiness.

The difficulty, of course, is that there is no way to be sure, while we are enjoying complacency and justifying its lack of struggle and effort, that at a later time we may not regret it and regard it as a lost opportunity. One thing is certain. As long as complacency remains with us we shall do nothing. Only when complacency is disturbed or threatened do we do anything. The cat, half asleep in the sunshine, purring on the back porch, is the perfect example of complacency. It will stay there until its complacency is disturbed by hunger, by a passing dog, by the loss of warmth with the coming of shade, or by the arrival of the children home from

DO YOU REALLY WANT PROMOTION?

school. Human behavior, and human thought processes, exhibit a surprising amount of the cat's reluctance to bestir itself until refusal is no longer possible. There is nothing we dislike and avoid more consistently than being made to think. And yet that is what I am about to attempt to jolt you into doing right at this juncture.

I want you to do more than simply ask yourself the simple question "Do I want to be a foreman?" It is very easy to say either *yes* or *no* to that question and so to go on sleeping in the sun without having settled anything or really answered anything. What I want you to do here and now is to find out whether you want to be a foreman by counting the costs and estimating the advantages. By weighing one against the other you may, if you are intellectually honest, be able to arrive at a decision that you will not come to regret later, whether it be affirmative or negative. Be assured, however, that it is no simple question you are asking yourself at this time.

In effect, you are asking yourself three questions in one. "Does promotion, getting ahead, increase in salary, make for greater happiness in life?" "Do I have the required qualifications for supervisory positions?" "Am I willing to put forth the effort over a period of years to attain promotion and master each level as step follows step in the upward climb?"

If we are answering the first item as philosophers or religious enthusiasts we shall probably say pro-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

motion is not progress nor does it necessarily make for happiness. If we are answering as normal members of a modern industrial group in normally wholesome surroundings we shall have to admit that we do not have much respect for the fellow who has no desire to add to his salary, his responsibilities, his social prestige, and his material welfare by rising from the ranks into the levels of foreman, supervisor, and manager. Diamonds are of themselves not particularly useful or valuable to the ordinary purchaser. What gives them value is that they are limited in number, somewhat difficult to get, and many people have been taught to desire them.

These factors apply equally to foremanship and may be the chief reasons for desiring promotion and the salary that goes with it. They are adequate social reasons, and they affect most of us whether we admit it or not. We are so constituted that securing that which we know others would like to have, and knowing that they envy us in our possession of it, is a factor that adds to our happiness. Philosophers and religionists are merely those who have persuaded themselves that this is not so—that possessing what others cannot possess does not make for happiness. Yet the philosopher is blindly inconsistent, for what makes him happy is exactly the knowledge that he has attained to levels of thought that are denied to less gifted individuals! The motive is the same. Either is regarded by the generality of mankind as bearing a mark of superiority, and as long as that is the case we, if we are

DO YOU REALLY WANT PROMOTION?

normal, want diamonds, philosophy, and promotion.

Next, then, you must decide whether you have the necessary qualifications for advancement, or, if you have not, whether you could acquire or develop them. This question is not too easy to answer. It is easy to do wishful thinking here. You may err in either direction. If the reward appears not worth the effort you may comfortably relieve yourself of all responsibility and worry by deciding you do not have what it takes to fill the bill—and you may be wrong. You may have it and not know it, or you may have it and just not admit it to anybody else or even to yourself. Sometimes feelings of inferiority are merely convenient excuses to free us from the uncomfortable compulsion to do hard work and keep at it.

Common as is the habit of underrating oneself it is probably less prevalent than that of overestimating one's own qualities. Because the promotion looks desirable and because you have had no trouble filling the job you have does not by any means provide assurance that you can fill the more exacting position. We are likely to be fooled by our feelings here also. The time to find out whether you have what is needed is before the step is taken. That way grief and disappointment may be avoided, and worry and anxiety. You may find out about your qualifications by taking various psychological tests at the state university, or you may safely rely on the combined judgment of three or four unbiased individuals who are in a position to know you and

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

who can be relied upon to give their honest opinions. Among these judges you will not find your parents, your wife or sweetheart, your intimate friends, or your "dearest enemies." They are all biased. If your boss, some of your fellow workers, an old schoolteacher, a former sports coach, and you yourself, all think you could handle the job you are reasonably safe in striving to attain it or in accepting it if it is offered. There is no instinct, intuition, or hunch that can be depended upon for this decision with one tenth of the assurance that can be placed on the objective method of test or the unbiased rating by competent judges.

Suppose you have decided that promotion is desirable and that you have the necessary qualifications. Are you willing to make the extra effort involved not only in the securing of the job but in the holding of it after you have it? There is no good way to judge the future except by the past. Have you heretofore been able to stick to somewhat unpleasant tasks in order to gain an end? Have you been able to keep on plugging even when that inevitable time arrives when interest seems to have evaporated, progress seems to have ceased, and the goal seems to look less desirable than it did at first, and its attainment less worth the effort? If you have shown this quality in previous work you may take it for granted that you still have it. If you have, on the contrary, started many things with enthusiasm only to abandon them at the unexciting stage of humdrum dead level, then you have a bad

DO YOU REALLY WANT PROMOTION?

habit that bodes no good for your success in a new and more difficult situation. Under these circumstances it will be wise to make sure you have corrected the habit before placing in jeopardy a success that presupposes that the habit has been eliminated or that it never existed. Quitting is a habit, and, like any other habit, it can be replaced by another and more profitable one. But the new habit must be learned. It cannot be simply resolved into being. Resolutions have a way of evaporating. The only way you can know whether you have the desired habit is to put it to the test of time and tempting distraction. You will know when you have learned the desirable and lost the undesirable.

When, and only when, you have weighed all these factors that enter into the simple question "To try or not to try for promotion?" can you give yourself a meaningful answer to the prior question, "Do you really want to be a foreman?" From now on in this book I am going to assume you have given these items careful consideration and that you honestly do want to be a foreman, that you have what it takes, that you are willing to make the persevering effort involved, and that you have decided to bring yourself into notice as a candidate for promotion in the organization to which you now belong.

CHAPTER 2

PUT YOURSELF IN THE BOSS'S SHOES FOR A MOMENT

"Blessed are they who expect nothing for they shall not be disappointed."

When one assumes the role of foreman, supervisor, superintendent, manager, he automatically assumes the functions of expecting and trusting. The bigger the job the greater the expecting. Expectation fulfilled makes the supervisory job a pleasant one. Trust misplaced makes it the kind of job you could wish would fall to your worst enemy. All the expecting the worker has to do is of the simplest sort—he expects to be told what to do. He expects to do it. He expects to be paid for his work. The supervisor has these three items to think of, but in addition he has to expect others to do what they are supposed to do. At the Battle of Trafalgar Nelson signaled to the ships of his fleet "England expects every man to do his duty." He said England. He meant Nelson. The preparation had been complete to the smallest detail. Every man knew what he was supposed to do when the battle would be joined and apparent confusion would reign. Nelson expected him to do that thing. That his trust was not misplaced was shown by the

PUT YOURSELF IN THE BOSS'S SHOES

result of the engagement. Had a captain of one of the ships of the line failed to stand up to the guns of the enemy and pulled out of the fray to save his own skin, or had the gunners of the frigate lost their nerve and refused to load and fire their broadsides, the history of England might have been written in far different terms. The admiral and the general can make the plans and lay out the pattern, trusting to others to execute the details, expecting that they will. No admiral and no general can stand beside each captain to see that he functions as he should. No captain can stand beside each ensign and each corporal in time of battle to tell him what to do next. No general manager can advise and instruct every department manager in all the myriad details of the administration of his department. If he could there would be no need for a department manager. Nor can any department or division manager, overseer, or foreman, have full and complete control and direction of all the minor acts of his subordinates.

A smooth-running organization is one in which each man in a supervisory job has so far trained his men that he has a reasonable expectation that each of his subordinates will carry out instructions not only to the letter in each detail, but in the spirit and intent. He trusts each man to meet any minor deviations from regular routine in a way best calculated to make the work run smoothly and profitably without too much detailed direction and supervision. He also trusts and expects that when certain

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

unusual emergencies arise involving situations that affect others and for the solution of which there is neither company rule nor precedent to guide him, he will consult with the man in charge of his work to get a ruling that will be based on the wider knowledge, experience, and authority that are part of the supervisory job.

When these expectations are justifiable and are met by the workers hour by hour and day after day the supervisor's job is a pleasant one. It is when he is not sure that things will go right when his back is turned and his direct supervision is removed that he becomes worried, irritable, and inefficient.

We are asking you now to put yourself in this supervisor's place in imagination and for the moment. You want the work of your department to run like a well-oiled and well-adjusted machine, with a minimum of friction and a maximum of accomplishment. You know you cannot be in more than one place at a time. You know you have to delegate some of your responsibilities—in fact most of them—to the foremen and gang bosses under your direction. What sort of man is going to meet with your hearty approval under these circumstances? Your subordinate foremen are, in a sense, separated parts of yourself set up in special situations to do your work while you are otherwise engaged. What sort of man is going to give you the comfortable feeling that the work will be done as well as though you were doing it yourself—or even better? And what sort of man will keep you on

PUT YOURSELF IN THE BOSS'S SHOES

pins and needles with the dread, almost the certainty, that when minor emergencies arise he will do the wrong thing and throw the work into confusion with consequent disruption of production and financial loss to the company?

When you have thought of management in this light, as your own problem, you are beginning to get an idea of how the boss regards you. It is not merely a matter of routine regularity or what is so often spoken of as "reliability." The steady-going wheel horse who never misses a day, is never a minute late at the start of the day's work or a minute early in quitting at its end, and who can be counted on to do today exactly what he did when he took over the job twenty-two years ago—such a reliable man may earn a long-time service button without ever being considered eligible for promotion. There is something more you are looking for in a man to whom you are going to have to delegate a serious portion of your own job. You want to know that when things that are not among the expected events occur your chosen man is going to recognize their nature, analyze them into their component parts, and come through with a solution that works and keeps working. Ability to see the problem before it develops into a troublesome situation—to see it before others are aware of it—and to devise ways of meeting it that may prevent its becoming serious is a trait your assistant should have if you are to feel comfortable about the way his portion of

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

your department will be run while you are wrestling with your own wider problems.

In other words, while the boss looks for and demands reliability in those under him he trusts especially those who in addition have resourcefulness, self-sufficiency, ingenuity—the ability to see a problem, analyze it, solve it. Do you have these traits? If so, do your superiors know you have them? If you have, and they know it, you can hardly escape promotion.

CHAPTER 3

TAKE A PERSONAL INVENTORY

The Bible does not speak very highly of the man who thanked the Lord that he was not like other men. The fault in this man was not that he was different from other men but that he was proud of it and satisfied with the comparison and wanted to call the Lord's attention, and that of any citizen within hearing, to the fact of this difference and the superiority that he felt it implied. Maybe he was an example of the "self-made man who is proud of his creator." Self-satisfaction is a mental or psychological aspirin. You have a headache because your internal plumbing has revolted against the mistreatment you have given it. The headache is your warning that your system needs a rest from the overload you have been throwing upon it and a new way of life that will give it a fair chance. The aspirin stops the headache but does nothing about the internal troubles. As well yank the phone out by the roots when a neighbor calls up to tell you your house is on fire. The phone may have interrupted your sleep, and now that it has been silenced you can go back to bed with a feeling that that annoyance will not soon occur again. It is easier to take an aspirin than it is to analyze the trouble, find

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

the cause, and remove it. It is easier to take a pill than to forgo a second helping of lobster salad or a fourth "old-fashioned" cocktail. The headache is the red flag that says "Danger—go slow." The aspirin taker solves the situation by having the red flag removed. When you find yourself feeling vastly pleased that you are "not as other men" you may know you are taking a psychological aspirin.

There are two extremes of this sort of thing. There is at one end the man who knows he is perfect and never misses a chance to tell all and sundry the glad news of his perfection; and at the other extreme is the fellow who is so unsure of himself that he fears to hold an original opinion, let alone express it or act on it—a Caspar Milquetoast. Neither one is much liked, and that is both unfortunate and unfair. "To understand all is to forgive all," but nobody takes the trouble or the time to try to understand how these people got the way they are. And when I say "nobody" I mean to include these people themselves.

One thing their friends seldom realize is that these extremely divergent characters are as they are largely for lack of one simple bit of technique—true self-evaluation. The cocky, conceited, self-satisfied braggart is so sure he is the Creator's masterpiece that it never occurs to him to wonder why, since he is so surpassingly able, he has not long ago either made himself wealthy or been made superintendent or been elected to the chairmanship of the board of directors. If it ever occurs to him to wonder why

TAKE A PERSONAL INVENTORY

some less perfect individual got the promotion that he himself expected he takes a psychological aspirin and says the boss is afraid to promote him because he knows that in the end he would get the boss's job away from him. If that does not quite remove the pain he takes another and says the fellow who was promoted got the promotion by such toadying and "bootlicking" as he would not stoop to no matter if he never got promoted. And, anyway, the job will soon be open again because the "stuffed shirt" that got it does not have "what it takes" to fill it. These are quite successful painkillers, but like a lot of the old-time soothing sirups they do not get at the real causes. And when the cause is not attacked the ailment gets worse instead of better, and the aspirin of self-delusion has to be resorted to more and more frequently.

How about the other fellow, the one with the "inferiority complex"? He does not think he is perfect. He thinks everybody else is better than he is. He lacks confidence and courage to assume any responsibility to tell anyone else what to do or how to do it. He is a "yes-man" because he lacks the nerve to stand up for his own views and opinions. If you had to pick a man for promotion you would not pick this man, and he hopes you will not. Yet this fellow may have more ability in some lines than the cocky conceited fellow who makes fun of him.

The trouble with both these men is that nobody ever trained them to evaluate their own good points and their own weak points with as much impartial-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

ity as though they were jurors trying to reach an honest verdict about the man whose case they are hearing at the bar of justice. If the cocky fellow would take himself apart psychologically and measure his traits one by one against those of all other people he knows, there would be a sound in the neighborhood of escaping compressed air as his ego deflated. But why speculate on such an event? The cocky fellow never makes such an evaluation of himself because he knows in advance what the result would be—nothing to change, no room for improvement. And, oddly enough, the other one, the one with the habit of thinking himself inferior, is kept from making a true self-evaluation by the same error. He too knows in advance what the verdict will be. Only this time it is reversed. He knows that if he compares himself with others it will but show him their superiority the more plainly and the more inescapably. Yet each of them would agree that the other would profit by the experience. The timid one knows that the overconfident one is not really so good as he thinks he is. He sees that by his bragging and his bluster he antagonizes everybody and makes everybody hope that he will stub his toe, dent his fenders, lose his job, or in any one of a hundred ways get set back on his heels. It is difficult to be sorry for a cocky fellow when the balloon of his self-esteem is punctured even for a moment. And yet just as truly this conceited one knows that the timid soul really has merits that he is afraid to use. He knows that the fear is unreason-

TAKE A PERSONAL INVENTORY

able and unreasoning and that if the timid one would take stock of himself and make the most of his virtues he could go places and do things. If you have ever attempted to instill this sort of confidence into such a victim of inferiority feelings you know how hopeless the task is. For every argument you advance he has twenty to prove that, although that may be all right for someone else, it does not fit in his case. He is in fact afraid you may convince him he is not so inferior as he feels he is; so he shuts off every avenue of approach and closes all the doors you attempt to open with your persuasion.

The interesting thing in both cases is that both these men, the conceited and the timid, are merely victims of bad habits of thought. They were not born either cocky or self-effacing. They learned the habits in early life and have done nothing since to correct them. It is easier just to say that that is the way they are and it is too late to do anything about it now. Fortunately this is untrue.

Now, each of us has some strong points and some weak spots. Few of us make the most of our virtues. Fewer still do anything to remove our weaknesses. You may not be unbearably conceited or handicapped by an overpowering sense of inadequacy. Yet you do have virtues you are not fully capitalizing and weaknesses that hinder your greater success. What we wish to suggest here is that you put yourself through an unbiased and impersonal examination. Go over yourself just as the doctor

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

for the insurance company does in his examination of you when you apply for a policy. He does not consider you as his friend Mr. X, but as a case, an organism, a specimen of humanity to be examined and evaluated. Think of yourself in the same way. Make a list of all the desirable traits you can think of. Think over all the successful people you know or know about, and put down the traits you think they have that helped them to get where they are. When you have this complete list of virtues take them up one at a time and make an honest guess as to how you compare with these men in that one respect and give yourself a rating that will show whether you have that trait in (1) large degree, (2) fair amount, (3) average, (4) little, or (5) practically none. All you have to do is put down the number from one to five that you think represents a fair estimate of your degree of possession of that virtue. If you are honest with yourself there will be some ones and some fives and more twos, threes, and fours.

Remember that this is what others are doing, including the boss, when they size you up and form an estimate of your character. They may not make out a rating sheet and put down numbers, but whether they are conscious of it or not they are taking an inventory of your traits and are measuring them by comparing them with those of all the other people they know. You yourself do that with others day after day. All we suggest is that you do the

TAKE A PERSONAL INVENTORY

same for yourself and do it on paper so you can see the score when it is done. You will be pleasantly surprised to find out that the balance sheet is not so bad after all. The final score may make a difference in your plans for the future. It should.

CHAPTER 4

HAVE A PROGRAM FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT

If you have followed us thus far you now have an inventory of your characteristics and traits and perhaps for the first time have a just estimate of where you stand in the scale of human virtues and defects. Such a list has no value in itself. Unless it stimulates you at least to wondering whether there is something you can do about it the effort will not be worth the time it took. If you have done an honest job in the preparation of the inventory you may have brought to the surface some disquieting facts. Only if this is true will it be of service to you. Or you can, on the other hand, look at this rating sheet and see only the traits where you have rated yourself high, and you can complacently settle back in self-satisfaction with the feeling that you are not so bad after all. You can glance at the items on which you have rated yourself 3, 4, or 5 and dismiss them with the comforting feeling that no one is perfect, and, after all is said and done, people with a worse rating have succeeded fairly well in the past. The Russians have a word that fits in nicely with this easygoing technique of self-justification—"Nichevo"—mean-

PROGRAM FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT

ing *what's the odds, what difference does it make, why worry?* Nichevo is another painkiller that induces mistaken feeling that all is well within. Our American expression "So what?" is a better way of putting it. It is true that what cannot be cured must be endured, and in such cases *nichevo* and *so what* are equally good philosophy. But when the situation *can* be cured *nichevo* does not spur one to action and *so what* may. *So what* in this case comes to mean "So, what can I do about it? What is next?" *So what* is a stimulant. *Nichevo* is a depressant. If you have been brought up to believe that traits of character are as fixed as the color of your eyes you may dismiss your discovery of definite defects with a shrug and a *nichevo*. But if you realize that such imperfections as impatience, lack of persistence, a hot temper, lack of confidence, ignorance, laziness, and a host of other undesirable traits are merely bad habits that you have allowed yourself to contract, albeit unconsciously and unintentionally, then there is something that can be done about it, and *so what* is a challenge to action.

But first of all you must be convinced that these traits are truly but examples of unfortunate training or, perhaps, simply the evidence of "arrested development." Arrested development sounds serious. As we are using it here it means only that growth stopped before it had gone as far as it might have gone under more favorable circumstances. It does not by any means carry with it the notion that growth cannot be resumed at any time if conditions

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

are brought about which favor such renewal of development.

The man who considered that his schooling was over the day he graduated—or “quituated,” if he quit school before graduation—is a victim of arrested development of the intellect. He can re-establish the growth of learning at any time he may choose to do so, regardless of how long it has been since his mental development was dependent upon a more or less regular attendance in a schoolroom. But arrested development may occur in other fields than mere book learning. If a man shows impatience and irritability when he does not have everything his own way; if he swears and throws the hammer across the room when he pounds his knuckles instead of the center punch, he is a victim of arrested development in the control of the emotions. He is still behaving as a child so far as giving vent to his feelings is concerned. We say he is “emotionally immature.”

As a matter of fact most of us are emotionally immature. We have never outgrown the emotional habits of childhood. When we say “Men are but boys grown tall, hearts don’t change much after all,” we mean emotional habits do not change so much as intellectual habits and muscular habits. But because you have not grown to man’s estate in the realm of your emotions does not mean that you have to remain that way. The reason people allow themselves to react to life with childish feelings is that nobody has ever taken the trouble to explain to

PROGRAM FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT

them that their emotional habits are as much subject to education as are their minds and their muscles. Our schoolteachers either do not know that this is so or are so busy with the job of cramming facts into their pupils that they have no time for the more important task of training the emotions and inculcating habits in the realm of the feelings. A youngster can graduate from grammar school, from high school, or—believe it or not—even from college, without having learned that emotional development is more important in life than is the accumulation of a mass of factual material. But when he gets out in the workaday world he begins to appreciate that, although it is important to know the multiplication table, it is more important to know how to get along with his fellow man—and himself. He finds out that it does not pay to be quarrelsome, belligerent, impatient, intolerant, conceited, grouchy, suspicious, irritable, self-effacing—at odds with the world and the people in it. He notices that such people do not “get the breaks” in life and that when they are passed by when the good things of life are being distributed they display their defective training by blaming it on others or on “luck” or anything and everything but themselves. That is emotional immaturity.

Remember this: Nobody promotes a man he does not like.

So what?

First and foremost get a firm grasp on these two facts:

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

1. If you do nothing about your emotional habits, they will remain as they are.

2. You can make your personality over to suit yourself.

Secondly grasp the significance of these two facts:

1. True development depends on having a definite program to follow.

2. Such development is a long, slow, difficult task, a matter of years rather than of days or weeks.

Having realized what these four facts mean to you, the next step is to make a start. I know of no better plan than the one Ben Franklin employed to make himself the foremost man of his time. Take, as he did, a single trait and keep a record of your success in acquiring it. He listed thirteen traits he thought would help him achieve success if he could build them into his character. He worked on the first trait by itself for one entire week and made a black mark in his book every time he caught himself in a failure to demonstrate that trait. At the end of the week the line at the top of his list opposite that trait was mostly black marks. He found that he did not have much of that trait in his make-up. In order not to go stale in his self-imposed task he dropped that trait and for the next week took up virtue No. 2, and that too showed a week of black marks, one mark to each failure. And so he went through the thirteen traits, one week to a trait. But here he showed his deepest understanding, for at the end of thirteen weeks he began again at the head of the list and devoted the four-

PROGRAM FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT

teenth week to trait No. 1 again, and so on through the list. Figure it for yourself. Four courses of thirteen weeks each is fifty-two weeks and fifty-two weeks is one year. And so on through another year, and another, and for many years, until he had so built the traits into himself that his slips and shortcomings were so rare that he found his record pages now as white as formerly they had been black. Somehow he knew it takes time to build new habits, and somehow he knew it could be done if he but held himself to the task. And, most important of all, he knew it was worth the effort and that it was the only way. There are no miracles in building character. Each man must build his own.

So much, then, for emotional adjustment to life. Of all the factors that make for success none is more important, yet we cannot overlook entirely the factual, cultural side on which our schools so generally concentrate. Knowledge is power, and knowledge is acquired not merely by reading but by absorbing and remembering the useful facts we gather in our reading. A man is judged at least in part by the knowledge he has available not only about his work and his company but about things of general interest to people of his own day and age. If in conversation with you someone discovers that you know something about sulfanilamide or the distribution of races in the Balkans or the meaning of the term "ex post facto," he more or less unconsciously assumes that you are mentally alert, that you probably know the details of your own work, that, in

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

short, you are a more than ordinarily intelligent individual. This combined with a pleasing personality makes for favor in the eyes of those seeking for talent to promote. Consistently built up through the years, it becomes the basis of a sure success.

And it can be built up. It is purely a matter of observing what things intelligent and cultured people talk about and then equipping yourself to meet them on their own ground. This may involve learning to talk and write your own language correctly, and it may involve learning to read in such a way as to make what you read a useful part of your store of knowledge. This, again, calls for a program, but if you care for recognition and advancement it is one of the things you will have to do. A few minutes spent every day at this task will sum up finally into a cultural education as good as any college can offer and more useful because you made it yours and put it to work as you acquired it.

Good programs for this purpose can be picked up at any modern public library, starting with the easier form and working on through the years to whatever cultural levels you may have the desire and the intelligence to attain. At the moment I can think of no good excuse for not undertaking such self-development if you have a desire to get ahead in the world. Think of the successful men you know, and you will have to realize that this quality of being generally well informed in many fields is

PROGRAM FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT

one of their characteristics—this and the ability to express clearly and correctly the thoughts that arise as a result of this knowledge. These things are within your power of attainment if you care enough for them to be willing to work for them—year after year.

CHAPTER 5

FACING THE FACTS

The whiners and the "buck-passers" are not wanted in the ranks of industrial supervisors. The word "alibi" is a Latin word meaning "elsewhere." It is properly used in the courts to establish the innocence of a person suspected of being involved in a crime. If the crime was committed in Times Square at seven o'clock of a certain Tuesday evening and the suspect can prove that at that exact time he was officiating at a lodge meeting in Jersey City and that he attended a dinner there prior to the ceremonies, which lasted from six until nine-thirty, he sets up conclusive proof that he was "elsewhere" when the event in question took place in Times Square. In the words of the lawyers, he has established an alibi.

First it was the sports writers and, following their lead, the players themselves who changed the meaning of the word so that it now is in general use as a term meaning an "excuse" and usually a poor and somewhat flimsy excuse that seems to satisfy the person using it but not his impartial critics. The change from its original meaning is easy to trace and to understand. The baseball player who offers an alibi for his batting slump does not mean to say,

FACING THE FACTS

as the word implies, that he was elsewhere when the umpire called him out on strikes. He means that the blame for the strike-out was "elsewhere"—that is, not in the batter himself. The worker or the foreman who offers an alibi for his failures or his mistakes is trying to establish the idea that the blame lies elsewhere. The word is badly overworked, but so is the practice of offering poor excuses that gave rise to its common use and acceptance.

The habit of offering alibis often starts in early childhood. The child, playing around the home, bumps his head on the corner of the table because he has never learned to look where he is going. He sets up a sympathy-arousing wail, and the fond parent soothes him by saying, "Naughty table, to hurt poor little Percy!" Unfortunately the only learning that has taken place is Percy's learning to place the blame on something other than his own conduct. The table cannot learn to get out of the way, and Percy does not learn that bumping tables, tripping over rugs, and falling on slippery floors are the results of his own heedless behavior. A person is not born an "Alibi Ike." He learns the habit as a convenient means of avoiding the consequences of his own mistakes. He carries the habit with him as he grows up. His failures in school are laid to the fact that the "teacher is down on him," whereas the successful pupil is "teacher's pet." When he is beaten by one of his schoolmates in a fair fight it is because he had a sore thumb or the other fellow

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

hit him when he was not looking. When he spoils a piece of work in the lathe the cutting tool was defective or the piece he was turning up was not uniform in hardness. The main point is that it was no fault of his.

There is "a distinction without a difference" between the "buck-passer" and the chronic "Alibi Ike." The user of the alibi technique is interested to shift the responsibility elsewhere—anywhere but onto his own shoulders. The "buck-passer" does this but in a more personal way. He shifts the blame onto other shoulders. It is sometimes called "the old army game." The colonel blames the major who blames the captain who blames the top sergeant who takes it and says nothing. That is what top sergeants are for. The Italian generalissimo in Libya and Egypt who was taken completely by surprise by the British at Sidi Barani, although he had been expecting the attack for six months, introduced a new note into army life by passing the buck upward, by blaming Mussolini for not having shipped some trucks that he had asked for some weeks previously. Ordinarily it is not good form to "pass the buck" to the boss. It is usually passed downward to those below who can be said to have failed to follow directions. Somehow or other the "buck-passer" seems to think that this lets him out. Nobody else thinks so, but he feels better, especially if the man he blames is not in a position to prove that the passing of the buck to him was wholly unjust. This fellow has the choice of taking

FACING THE FACTS

the undeserved blame or of throwing it back to the boss and making it stick. This clears him conclusively and at the same time costs him his job.

If we stop at this point to try to appreciate the feelings of a man who has to work under a foreman who habitually "alibis" himself out of his own errors or passes the buck on down to those under him, we understand the full meaning of our first statement that the "buck-passer" is not wanted in the ranks of industrial supervisors. He is not wanted by the men who have to work under him, and he is not wanted by the men for whom he has to work. The men who work under him resent the unfair advantage he takes of his position. They distrust him and, if they are normal human beings, will take any safe opportunity to "show him up," to place him in a position from which there is no escape by alibi or by "buck-passing." When such a condition exists, morale is at a low ebb. The men are not working with the foreman or even for him. They are actually working against him. The "buck-passing" boss inevitably destroys morale. Is it any wonder the management does not want such a man on the job? Queer things continually "happen" under such a boss, and the management wants to know why. If, when the matter is put up to the foreman, he has a ready alibi and lays the blame elsewhere there is little hope that conditions will get better. Management pays the supervisor for the very purpose of assuming the responsibility for everything that happens in his department, and

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

they expect him to stand up to that responsibility and to realize that directly or indirectly the smooth and efficient running of his division rests squarely on him. Unpleasant things are bound to happen in any working group. There is always a reason for everything that happens. To acknowledge the responsibility for finding that reason even if it involves some error on his part is one of the first requirements of good foremanship. Finding a reason is far different from offering an excuse. An alibi is a poor excuse for an excuse.

Thus far we have been considering the alibi as something offered to others to excuse our own shortcomings. Making a practice of this is a bad enough habit, but, even with all the consequences we have pointed out, it is not nearly so damaging to one's prospects in life as the habit some of us contract of offering alibis to ourselves. The man who blames his luck, or the breaks of life, for his present lack of success, his poor equipment for advancement, is likely to remain among the ranks of those who wish things were otherwise but who do nothing about it—at the bottom of the ladder. "Breaks" do not just happen. We cause them to happen, consciously or unconsciously. There may be "breaks" in the sense that things happen over which we have no control; things that affect our plans and our lives. But breaks, luck, chance are devices of the universe that operate on a fifty-fifty basis. In the long run there are just as many favorable breaks in our lives as unfavorable ones. We call the unfavorable ones

FACING THE FACTS

"bad luck" and take credit to ourselves for the favorable ones. This is a form of intellectual dishonesty, emotional immaturity, in that it substitutes feelings for thinking. One of the first lessons we must learn if we are to climb the ladder of promotion is that we are where we are because of what we are. Facing the fact that through the years we get just what we deserve is one of the most difficult of life's many hard lessons, and it is one that most people never learn. As a rule the only people who admit it are those who are unusually successful. It is just as true, though less palatable, for those who fail.

Once we acknowledge that our present status in life is of our own making there immediately comes to the front the other significance of the admission. If you are where you are today because of the use you have made of all your yesterdays it is equally true that you will be, ten years from today, where you will then be because of the use you make of your todays and tomorrows as they arrive one after the other. There are no other factors. The man who gets a "break" today is merely the man who prepared for it yesterday, last month, last year. Sometime in the next few months or years you will be faced with an opportunity. They come to all of us. It is a good "break" if you are ready for it. The point to realize is that complete readiness when the chance comes is a matter that depends on the individual and on him alone.

CHAPTER 6

COOPERATE

"Co" means "together." "Operate" means "work." Cooperation is teamwork. The man who cooperates is one who has in mind the general goal for which his group is striving and so conducts himself as best to serve that end. You can do exactly what you were hired to do and do it "up to the handle" day after day and still not be a part of the team that is your gang, your group, your department, your company. You may be doing your work to perfection so far as production is concerned but be doing it with grumbling and grouching, with kicks and complaints. You may be doing your work, but you are helping to destroy the morale of your group, and where morale is low production suffers. Nursing a grievance, real or fancied, is one of the commonest forms of lack of cooperation.

To the foreman, bothered with the multitude of details involved in keeping the work rolling smoothly, the chronic kicker, the man with the perpetual "gripe," is a source of constant irritation. He has enough worries without having them added to by knowing that whatever he asks you to do is going to be received with sour looks or sullen compliance at best and with protest and objection or

COOPERATE

only halfhearted obedience at the worst. The foreman regards such a man as a pest, a thorn in the flesh, even though he may know that in the end the work will be done and done properly. Put yourself in his place. Which man would you favor for promotion when the need for an assistant arises, the man who has shown a willingness to follow directions with good will or the one who has always shown resistance and resentment? Even if the kicker is a better workman you will choose the one who has shown himself genuinely cooperative. And you would be right in doing so, for the chronic objector will not change his tendencies just because he gets a new job. Men will not work for him so willingly as they will for the more cooperative individual.

But ability or the lack of it, although it is a large factor, is not what decides most promotions. Likes and dislikes enter into the picture. In a perfect society we might imagine that this would not be so. A man should be advanced not because his foreman likes him but because of his fitness for the job. But we do not live in a perfect society. The foreman may think he is being impersonal and not biased by his liking for a man rather than by the man's ability, but he is actually influenced to see ability in a man he likes and to fail to see it in a man who "rubs him the wrong way."

There are exceptional people who can set personal feelings aside and act without being influenced by them, but they are so rare that we cannot expect to

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

find them in every shop. Abraham Lincoln was such a man. He appointed to his cabinet a man who had slighted and insulted him some years previously when Lincoln was an uncouth and unknown lawyer appearing in an Eastern court as an associate of this man in a case in which both were retained by the same client in the conduct of a corporation lawsuit. Lincoln selected him because he believed him to be an able man fitted for the job. Most men would have written him to tell him in effect, "You never thought the man you belittled would ever be president. Had you been decent to me I would now make you a member of my cabinet. As it is I am selecting a better man for the job." Until the general run of men become as magnanimous as Lincoln, it is safer to assume that when the time comes to confer a favor upon another most men will select as the recipient a man whom they like rather than one who has previously been a source of irritation. You may write it down as one of the rules of the game that a foreman will recommend for promotion a man he likes. And when you become a foreman yourself you will do likewise.

The grouser, the complainer, the chronic kicker, is never liked—by his superiors, by his fellow workers, by his inferiors. He does not even like himself. The man who is helped upward is the man who is liked. The first man to point this out to me was a seventy-year-old industrial engineer. After he had retired, and this was some twenty-five years

COOPERATE

ago, he remarked, as he looked back on his varied experience, "If you want promotion get yourself liked. I have noticed that bosses forgive men they like for mistakes which would result in dismissal if committed by a man they dislike. The virtues of a disliked man are ignored; those of a favorite are magnified. I would rather have a pleasing personality than high intelligence."

One should be careful here to distinguish between pleasing and toadying. A pleasing personality in business and industry is pleasing partly because of its firmness and strength. The timid soul may never intentionally hurt anyone's feelings, but neither does he command their respect. One may avoid bruising the sensibilities of others without sacrificing firmness and decision. I know a plant manager who illustrates what I am attempting to point out. When some of the veteran workers in the plant complained with feeling that a newly hired supervisor was using slave-driving methods and harsh treatment which no one in the plant had been accustomed to employ in its fifty years of corporate life, this manager called the supervisor in to show him the error of his ways. It was the supervisor who told me about it, not the manager. He said the boss offered him a cigarette and lighted it for him, told him to take a seat and asked him how he liked the work and how he was making out. After hearing the reply the manager said, as I recall it, something like this: "We have been much pleased to see how earnestly you have been trying to get the most

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

out of your department with the least expense. This is rather a peculiar organization. You have probably noticed it. We never ride our men here or 'cuss them out,' and never have. You can trust them to do their part if they know what it is. When you have been with us a while you will see for yourself how it works because that is the way you yourself will be treated. We do not need a whip here. Try it a week and my guess is you will be surprised at the results. Let me know how you make out." The manager did not lack disciplinary firmness, but he had arrived at the top of the ladder because he could get things done by making his men want to do them. By the same pleasant tactics he had got his own superiors to do things for his good, for their good, and for the good of the company.

All life is a series of adjustments and compromises. Not even a European dictator has everything his own way. Grousing, grumbling, griping, are expressions of childish resentment against the fact that the world around us is not ordered for our own special benefit. Nothing suits everybody. Nobody finds all the rules of life pleasant. Cooperation results from the realization that in order to produce the greatest good for the greatest number others besides ourselves must be considered and sometimes even favored if, in the long run, we are to get the most out of life and out of ourselves. And one of the things we shall get in greater degree is pleasure. Another is promotion.

CHAPTER 7

SEEING PROBLEMS

Mike Kelly, who taught me how to swing a pick over either shoulder and how to shovel left-handed as well as right-handed, used to express his scorn of a town loafer by saying, "Sure, that fella ain't afraid of work at all. He'll lie down right beside any amount of it and go to sleep." The same thing might be said with one alteration about most foremen. Substitute the word "problems" for "work." Most foremen face problems in their daily work and are so little concerned with them that they never even see them. Some men will run a department with routine regularity exactly as it was run when they took it over twenty years previously. Such men are not creative foremen. They are supervisory machines. There may be a dozen ways in which methods might be improved, but they never see them. When in the course of time such a man dies or retires and another takes his place the new man sees the job as a challenge to his ingenuity and studies possible improvements. If they look good to him he tries them out, always leaving the way clear to go back to the old method if the new one does not work out satisfactorily. By such means progress is made, effort reduced, costs cut down,

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

and product improved in quality or quantity. The general remark after such a change has been effected is "Simple enough! It is a wonder nobody ever thought of it before."

Seeing problems is a habit of thought. Unfortunately the habit is not taught in our schools. In fact, the habit of seeing problems except those set by the teacher is a cause of acute pain to the teacher, who regards such a pupil as a classroom nuisance. He is supposed to do as he is told and do it the way he is told. Initiative is discouraged rather than developed. This is just what might be expected of our assembly-belt method of mass "education." Most teachers never see a tenth of the problems their classrooms present. Their job is to take forty children in September, put them through a standardized routine, and turn them out in June as nearly alike as are the cars that roll off the end of the assembly line. Originality of method is not looked upon with favor by their superiors, and they in turn restrict it when it crops out in those in their charge. Unless one learns the habit at home or on the playground he is likely to develop into the routine-minded man who has lost the capacity to see problems or who, if he sees them, fears to tackle them.

Many men are deterred from looking for new ways of doing things by a fear that if their ideas prove wrong they may be laughed at or called down for trying something out that does not work. If one "good idea" in four "pans out" as a real im-

SEEING PROBLEMS

provement, and if they have all been well thought out before being tried and are tried out conservatively at first, the company can well afford the three false tries in order to profit by the fourth one which succeeds. Notice that we say "well thought out." We are not suggesting that a new man make a clean sweep of everything that has been done in his department by his predecessors just for the sake of starting something. What we have in mind is orderly evolution, not ill-considered revolution. The fact that the old system has operated successfully for many years is evidence that there must be much good in it. It has proved its fitness by surviving. In general it is probably better than a system that might be devised overnight by the enthusiastic newcomer. It is the product of the many minds that have gone before him, and many heads are usually better than one. The wise procedure is to continue existing practices while studying opportunities for betterment. The old adage to make haste slowly is good advice.

It must be kept in mind that, although the ability to see the problems is a mark of good foremanship, it entails the equally necessary capacity for evolving a solution of the difficulty after it has been thoroughly appreciated as a problem needing attention. The doctor may be a wizard at diagnosis, but it will do his patient little good unless he knows how to treat the ailment that his examination has convinced him exists. Most of the devising of remedial measures has to take place in the realm

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

of thinking rather than of immediate action. The foreman assembles all the facts he can lay his hands on that have a bearing on the problem and subjects them to painstaking classification and analysis. When the diagnosis is complete he starts a verbal "trial-and-error" procedure by thinking of all possible solutions and then mentally applying them to the problem to figure out in advance of any action just what the consequences of the various changes would be. Would a given plan solve the trouble? Would it cost more than it saves? Would it involve other difficulties that might be worse than the one to be relieved? Would its introduction upset plant operation in other departments of the organization? Which of the many possible solutions presents the most gain in efficiency and the least loss or disturbance? Only when this analysis has been made can the foreman feel that he has a workable plan that he is ready to submit to management. He must have thought over for himself all the objections that management is sure to bring up when the plan is broached. He will not then be caught in the embarrassing position in which he has to say, "That is something I never thought of!" On the contrary, if he has answered the objection to himself he creates an impression of thorough mastery of his subject when he answers it when his superiors bring it up.

If you are considering yourself as a candidate for promotion to foremanship this factor must be taken into consideration. You do not magically assume

SEEING PROBLEMS

this new frame of mind the day your rating changes from worker to foreman on the company's time books. It is a habit of thought, and habits are developed by exercise. Ask yourself whether you have ever thought of your own job as one presenting many problems needing solution. If not, there is no time like the present for beginning to cultivate the habit. No one knows the job as does the man who is closest to it. If you have not learned to see problems in the work you know most about, what are the chances you will see them in the work of others with which you are not so familiar? Almost any man with normal intelligence can see places where changes could be introduced in the work he is doing which would simplify handling, speed up processes, cut out useless motions, and avoid needless delays. Once he takes this view of his job he becomes a job doctor on the keen lookout for cues, clues, and symptoms, a diagnostician analyzing what he sees into its significant parts, and a family physician prescribing, in his own mind, the remedies he would apply were he given the assignment of trying to remove the difficulty he has discovered. If after due consideration of the matter in all its angles he is sure he is right he formulates his plan in such definite terms that he can explain it clearly to his boss, and then, and not till then, he should lay it before his immediate superior for consideration.

What action the foreman takes is a secondary matter. He may ridicule the idea and later propose it as his own, much to the worker's disgust. He

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

may approve of it and adopt it. He may merely shrug the whole thing off as not worth trying. These things are incidents in the main plan, which is the development within himself of the habit of seeing as problems what others accept without question as the existing order of things and of carefully working out a solution to the problem that has been seen. It is a habit that in time will make him stand out from his fellow workers as one who takes a broader view of his work than does the ordinary employee.

One good way to discover such problems is by a regular reading of trade journals. In these magazines other ingenious men tell of problems they have seen and solved. None of them may be doing just what you are doing, but you may see that the methods they applied to their jobs might with some changes be applied to your own. George Westinghouse and his development of the air brake for railroads was a good example of all the points we have raised in this chapter. He had a small shop a mile from the Schenectady station of the New York Central and used to see the trainmen respond to the "down-brakes" signal which the engineer blew on his whistle as he passed the Westinghouse shop. All the trainmen jumped to their positions on the car platforms and began to turn the handwheels that tightened up the brake mechanisms under the cars. The more he watched them the more convinced he became that it was a crude and ineffective waste of time and energy. It should not take a full mile to

SEEING PROBLEMS

stop a train nor should it require the whole crew to do it. He saw as a challenge something that every trainman and every traveler had seen ever since the days of the first Camden and Amboy railroad and accepted as a necessary part of railway operation. To him it was something to be improved upon. He analyzed all the factors and decided that some mechanical device should replace the combined efforts of the crew, something more powerful and something the engineer could bring into play for the whole train at once. Something—but what? He pondered over many possible solutions using chains and cables, but all had insuperable objections.

Some months before this a neighbor's boy had induced him to subscribe to a magazine that had not yet begun publication. He had forgotten all about it when the first copy arrived. It happened to come while he was thinking over his problem. Sitting on his workbench eating his lunch at noon that day he heard the engineer whistle "down brakes." At the moment Westinghouse was reading an article in the new magazine about the great new source of power that was to replace steam for the driving of engines—compressed air. It was a fantastic dream, of course, but at that time many a wildcat stock promoter was selling stock in some compressed-air enterprise that was advertised as sure to pay fabulous dividends. Westinghouse was too good a mechanic to be deluded by the impossible projects, but he did see in compressed air the solution for the problem whose importance was just then being emphasized

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

by the screech of the "down-brakes" signal. He had found the answer to his problem by reading in a magazine about an entirely different application.

There were no technical trade journals in those days; but a magazine article provided the missing clue for the solution of his problem, and he made the application to his own needs himself. He did not, however, attempt to sell the idea until many months of experimentation in his own shop had shown him it would work. And when it was tried under practical working conditions it was tried on a single train. The proof of its applicability was more spectacular than most foremen can hope for when they suggest new methods to their managements. Westinghouse and several New York Central directors and division heads were in the baggage car of the train as it sped toward the Schenectady stop when the engineer spied a balky horse in the shafts of a farmer's rig obstinately stalled directly across the tracks at the crossing near the Westinghouse shop. Instantly and automatically he sounded the "down-brakes" signal and then remembered the new air brakes which he immediately slammed on full force. The train stopped a few feet short of the balky horse, but the directors and division heads and Westinghouse were all piled up in a heap at the forward end of the baggage car. Even the scoffing Commodore Vanderbilt had to admit that "stopping a train with wind" was not so absurd as he had supposed it to be.

SEEING PROBLEMS

Westinghouse revolutionized railroad travel the world over by seeing as a problem what others had seen merely as an accepted practice, by fitting what he had read into the solution for which he was seeking and by testing his solution to see that it was good.

CHAPTER 8

OUTGROW YOUR JOB

In planning your future there is one thing you need not bother about and that is the securing of a promotion when you are fully ready for it. The only thing you need worry about is whether you are making the most of the opportunities your present job offers you as a means of personal growth and development. Do not get the idea that you have to compel the "big boss" to promote you. Management is continually on the lookout for men to fill supervisory jobs from gang boss to plant manager. They are hard to find. When you are recommended for promotion someone is laying a bet that you will make good. Someone is going on record when he names you instead of someone else. Naturally he wants the best assurance he can get that he is not betting on a loser. The only assurance he can possibly have is from the way you have handled the job you are on and how you have made it contribute to your own development.

Practically every man on the pay roll does satisfactorily the work that is assigned to him. If he did less he would soon cease to be on the pay roll. Few managements today would approve of the employer whom the Bible tells us about who promoted

OUTGROW YOUR JOB

a worker with the words, "Thou hast been faithful in a few things; I will make thee ruler over many." Being faithful in a few things is not enough to warrant promotion. That much is expected from every worker all the time. Management knows only too well that excellence in handling a lathe or a boring mill or a punch press or an adding machine is no indication of an ability to handle men, plan work, get out production in a department, and maintain morale while keeping costs down. They call for different traits. The best lathe hand in the shop might be the poorest foreman. Ordinarily the reverse would not be true—the best foreman in the plant usually has it in him to be a good lathe hand as well as a good handler of men. The quality that makes him a good machine operator is one of the qualities that makes him a good foreman; but it is only one of many, and some of the others are more important. Management is looking for a man who has that trait that makes him master of the job he has been hired to do, but they look for something else, something beyond, something over and above mere mechanical aptitude in the man they want for a supervisory job.

The job—any job—offers continual opportunity to develop these additional traits. All work involves human contacts. All men, by the process of growing to manhood, necessarily develop personalities that differ somewhat from the personalities of other men about them. But personalities, as we have seen, need not be left to chance. They can be

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

developed according to plan, and the job provides all the necessary implements with which to execute the plan once it has been decided upon. Daily there arise in the course of your work circumstances that are outside the routine of your regular duties. These are the whetstones on which you may grind off your rough edges, shape up a well-formed personality, and smooth it down to reduce future friction.

Is the man who works on the product before it comes to you slipshod, a slacker, a "buck-passer," a general nuisance in the department? You can react to such a situation in either of two ways. You can let it "get your goat," let it irritate and infuriate you, or you can study the man and the situation and by tact and diplomacy bring the man to a realization of what he is doing, not to you but to himself and his own best interests. This is the sort of thing you will have to do every day when you are a foreman. Use the situation to develop the trait now that you are going to need later. "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs" you have learned one of the habits the company looks for in its foremen. It is not easy, but it can be acquired and it pays dividends. You may not think that anyone has noticed how you have met the test, but it is observed nevertheless and scored up to your credit. No single example of it may attract attention; but the habit you have formed becomes part of your personality, and that

OUTGROW YOUR JOB

does register with those who are watching your conduct.

Is there a general tendency among your group to "knock" the foreman, the superintendent, the company and its policy? The path of least resistance is to join the anvil chorus. There is even a momentary something to be gained by being a leader of the kickers, grousing a little more boldly, a little louder, a little more frequently and unreasonably. If you assume this role you may gain a fickle following for the time being, but when the showdown comes you will find your former followers discreetly slide out from under and leave the burden of unpleasantness firmly on your willing shoulders. This may be something you had not counted on; and it may be both embarrassing and costly to you, but it is not the chief evil involved in the situation. You will have built up a habit, and a reputation for having the habit, that will work against your future advancement. Such habits are easy to contract but hard to get rid of. And such unfavorable opinions among your superiors are hard to live down once you have built them up. This does not mean that one should adopt a Pollyanna attitude and pretend that everything is lovely when as a matter of fact there are things that are all but intolerable, things that badly need straightening out. The point is that such things should be welcomed as additional opportunities to develop an ability that will be serviceable whatever the future holds in store for you. If the situation needs rem-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

edying there are better and more effective ways of bringing about the desired change than are offered by ill-tempered grouching. In fact, grouching alone will probably never solve the difficulty anyway. One can agree that the emergency exists and needs attention without becoming emotional over it. By presenting the case to the proper authorities in its true light, calmly and logically, one stands a much better chance of obtaining a real hearing of the grievance and action looking to its removal. Again, however, for you the chief gain is in the change that the procedure works in your own personality and in your standing in the eyes of those whose good opinion means much to your prospects of advancement. And you have gained rather than lost in prestige with the knockers and kickers whose tactics had previously brought no results other than the heightened ill feeling on all sides.

Does it sometimes seem that when you have gone a bit out of your way to help someone else out of a jam or to do one of those little extra things that you do not get paid for but that make the department run a bit more smoothly, you not only get no credit for the deed but actually find that the credit is taken by someone else? Does it make you feel that such efforts are not appreciated and cause you to decide not to repeat the performance? It should not, and for two reasons. First, it only *appears* that someone else stole the credit. In a single instance, yes, you may get no credit for what you have done, but not in the long run. If the cooperative

OUTGROW YOUR JOB

behavior is repeated and becomes a habit with you no amount of "chiseling" on the part of others deprives you of the eventual reward. In fact one of the surest ways of obtaining credit for such acts is to attempt voluntarily to give the credit to someone else before he is tempted to grab it away from you. By giving credit to others you lose none yourself, and good will has been introduced into the picture where otherwise ill feeling might be aroused. The man who steals credit is never wholly comfortable about it, especially in your presence, for he knows you know the truth. He pacifies his conscience by taking a dislike to you and behaving toward you as though you had wronged him, not he you. But especially valuable is the experience of giving others credit; because at best this is a world of conflicting interests, and the habit of cooperating is one that must be cultivated if we are to work with our fellow men or to get them to work with us.

These are but a few illustrations of what I mean by using the job to develop yourself. Taken one by one they seem to mean little. Character development, as I have pointed out, is a plant of slow growth. Taken altogether, as a conscious effort to improve yourself, they constitute the process of growing out of your job. You cannot start such a program on Monday and expect results the following Friday in the form of a promotion or a raise. The plan has to be followed consistently day after day, year in and year out, before it becomes such a part of you that those who come in daily contact

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

with you learn to expect such conduct from you. Not even you yourself will ever realize the full effect such an acceptance of these traits as part of your character has on your later welfare. The supervisor who recommends you for promotion may never analyze the traits and may not be fully aware of his reasons for selecting you instead of another, but the result is nonetheless inevitable.

You grow out of this job into a better one and out of that into the next higher place as surely as a boy of ten outgrows his clothes. The suit fitted him when it was new. In fact it may have been bought intentionally a bit too large for him, and now the sleeves are halfway up to the elbows. Although it is perfectly obvious that the boy is now too big for his clothes there never was one definite day in which it could be said, "Today his suit is too small for him although yesterday it was large enough." So there never will come a dividing line for you at which your superiors will be able to say, "Yesterday he was not ready for promotion but today he is." The changes of growth are so gradual that when the realization comes it comes as a recognition of something that has been there for some time. It comes when other events, other factors in the general situation, make it necessary to find a man to fill a vacancy. It may be long overdue because of adverse business conditions that have prevented expansion or new development, but when the right time arrives the appointment is made as a matter of course. Growth forces recognition. If the man-

OUTGROW YOUR JOB

agement of the plant is too blind to see the fitness of the promotion, others are not. When a man grows out of his job doors open elsewhere if they fail to open in the company in which he is working. Any management worthy of the name is not going to let this happen. Ability developed within an organization is an asset not to be lightly tossed aside or freely allowed to escape for the benefit of competitors or others. Leadership is too rare a quality to be overlooked or to be allowed to go unrecognized. Pure self-interest, if no higher motive, dictates that all the talents developed in an organization shall have scope for their full manifestation. Any other policy is one of sheer stagnation.

Outgrow the job by systematic personal development and improvement and "it must follow as the night the day" a bigger job will not only be available, it will be thrust upon you.

CHAPTER 9

A ONE-LEGGED STOOL

In certain sections of the West where old-time Swiss dairymen have settled it is common practice for the milkers to sit on one-legged stools while milking the cows. Unstable support, one might think, but odd as the sight is it is as nothing to the appearance the men present when, having finished with one cow they get up to move to the next one in the line; for when they rise the stool comes up with them, and its one leg projects straight out backward like a short tail. The stool is strapped to their bodies with a sort of harness around the thighs and waist in such a position and location that when they sit down again the stool is conveniently under them without being touched by the hands, which must be kept clean and sterile while the milking is in progress. It is thus more hygienic as well as a timesaver; efficiency devised by some ingenious dairyman of the long ago and adopted by his followers as an improvement over the old-fashioned three-legged milking stool of the traditional milkmaid. The stool being thus securely strapped to the person, what would otherwise be a difficult feat of balancing calls for no more skill or attention than does sitting in an easy chair in the living room.

A ONE-LEGGED STOOL

Its adoption, without straps, is not to be recommended for the home, the office, or expensive restaurants. It is too likely to tip over. It might serve a purpose in church or for people who have to listen to dull lectures, since it would be a strong deterrent against going to sleep. In the two years during which I was a farmer and had to milk a pair of somewhat restless cows I experimented with a stool with two legs, but even this had to be used with some degree of art if slips were to be avoided—especially when the cows moved about as cows may do when being not too skillfully handled. It was more stable than a stool with one leg, but for true security I should recommend the addition of the steadying third leg.

What has this to do with the industrial worker? Just this; that most men in pursuing their daily chores in a manufacturing plant to earn their weekly wages are sitting, figuratively speaking, on one-legged stools. A man who knows only one job, no matter how expert he may have become in handling that job, is trusting to a one-legged support. And, as with the Swiss milkers in California, the only way he can obtain security is by being strapped firmly to the supporting device—in this case the job. If you are satisfied to be strapped to the one job and are sure that you can carry it with you from year to year and perhaps from plant to plant, the one-legged job will meet all your needs. Few of us care to trust our futures to a single line of support in this fashion. To begin with, progress in in-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

dusttry may do away with the process, the machine, and the job and leave the man who has spent years perfecting his skill at the work without anything but the hard floor to sit on. This has happened to too many skilled mechanics in the last twenty years to need much emphasis here. Secondly, there is the factor of self-development to consider. A job is more than a means of earning a week's pay. It is something to stimulate growth in the man who is working at it. So long as a man can see that he is acquiring useful knowledge through his work; so long as he can feel that the job is building valuable traits into his personality any job is a good job. But when the job is no longer a source of new information or personal improvement it ceases to be one that a man with any forward-looking ambition will want to hang onto indefinitely. The one-job man who has so mastered all the techniques that he has nothing more to learn has ceased to grow. Such a man is old whether he be twenty-five or seventy-five.

Then there is the consideration in which we are here more particularly interested, of how such a one-legged job affects your chances of promotion. You may have demonstrated that you are the best punch-press operator in the shop and on that basis feel that you are entitled to the next promotion to the foremanship of the room. If there are no other machines than punch presses in the department you might have some justice in your claim, but even so there is the next step to consider. No plant is all

A ONE-LEGGED STOOL

punch presses. There will be lathes and boring mills and welding torches. How fit to direct these other operations will you be if all you know is punch presses, no matter how complete your punch-press knowledge is? If by chance there are enough of these machines to need a punch-press supervisor and you get the job you are still sitting on a one-legged stool. There comes a time when broader knowledge and experience are required if further promotion is to be hoped for. If you take over the job of supervising the work of men who cut chips from cast iron, and all you know is how to feed brass strips into a stamping press, how long do you suppose it will be before the machinists discover your ignorance of cutting speeds, of the best steel to use in your cutting tools, of what constitutes an acceptable job of turning or milling or gear cutting? The supervisor must know more than one thing.

Does this mean that you must give up the punch-press job and start in as a machinist's apprentice and learn to run turret lathes, shapers, planers, and boring mills? Not necessarily. But if you are young and have not yet accumulated a too expensive home establishment even that might turn out to be a good investment and a step toward greater earning capacity in later years. Or diemaking, or drafting, or machine design, or time and motion studies may be the things you can best combine with your punch-press skill and knowledge to fit you for the next job above the operator's routine. In the old days there was only one way to learn

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

these things and that was by working at the trade in a shop. Today it is possible in almost any industrial town to learn these things in trade schools at night while carrying on at the regular job during the daylight working hours. Then there are books, and good ones, from which one may learn immensely valuable things about the other processes in his plant. And there are trade journals with helpful articles by men who have as much skill and knowledge of the other processes as you have of yours. It is not necessary to be a skilled artisan to supervise skilled artisans, but it is necessary to know much about their work if you are to direct it successfully. There is a difference between knowing a job and knowing about a job. No plant manager can run every machine in his plant as well as the best operator can, but he must know more about the job than even the skilled worker does.

An interesting point arises just here in connection with the matter of the competition you will meet when promotions are being considered by the man higher up. The man who has knowledge of two or more lines of work has the advantage over the man who has but one. By his broader knowledge he eliminates from competition men in each of the separate lines who know only their own processes, even though each in his own line is a better man at that particular work than is the man of wider experience. A thorough knowledge of two things eliminates competition from either field alone, even though the two things may seem at first glance to

A ONE-LEGGED STOOL

be unrelated. I met a young man in Portland, Oregon, who had worked in hotels and restaurants and lunch counters for eight years, in the kitchens and behind the counters, until he had a fairly wide experience in catering to the appetites of the eating public and in meeting the problems that are met by those who try to meet and satisfy the tastes of the public. He felt that he had gone as far as he could go in his field, and he was unwilling to remain a restaurant worker the rest of his life. He felt that what he most wanted to do was to sell, but he hesitated to throw away eight years of valuable experience and start afresh in a new venture. Such a gamble was both unwise and unnecessary. In a near-by town was a plant making both gas and electric devices for hotel and restaurant use, coffee urns, toasters, grills, steam tables, and similar equipment. He explained his plan to the manager and was given a chance to work on the manufacture of each of these kinds of apparatus. After two years he knew how each piece was constructed and of what materials and how it was designed to operate. But so did several other members of the organization. Yet when he was sent out on the road to sell the devices he almost immediately surpassed many of the old salesmen in placing the goods with purchasers. The reason was obvious. He not only knew his apparatus, he also knew the problems of the purchasers. He knew their troubles and their needs. He could talk their language as well as that of his employers. There may have been many bet-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

ter restaurant and hotel men than he; and there may have been many men in the appliance factory who knew the apparatus as well or better, but he had something none of these others had—a knowledge of both the apparatus and the actual practical uses of it in the hands of the purchaser. He had a three-legged stool—restaurant practice, apparatus knowledge, and sales ability.

He planned it that way. Undoubtedly there were friends of his wife who made remarks about the rolling stone or the virtue of sticking to one thing when he apparently threw aside all the experience he had gained in his first eight years of business life. Their kindly sympathy for the poor wife of such a man did not interest him. He had a plan, but they did not know it. Today he is a stockholder in the appliance company and has made many suggestions that they have adopted for the improvement of their devices, suggestions that were practical because of his knowledge of the uses to which they would be put. And he has money enough in the bank to buy a restaurant or two of his own if he still hankers for the business of preparing and dispensing foods to the consuming public.

So whether you plan to branch out into new fields or to remain with your plant until you become its general manager, start early to construct new legs to your means of support. If you want promotion you must have more than a single line of knowledge. Your present foreman has, and his boss has a still wider horizon. That is one reason why he is

A ONE-LEGGED STOOL

the boss. But the gathering of wider knowledge must be a planned affair. Study the situation and find out what knowledge, skill, or experience is going to be helpful if ever you are promoted to a supervisory job, and then bend your energies toward getting what is needed. It will take time, and it will involve some sacrifice on your part, but when you have your three-legged stool all built you will find that you are offered a four-legged chair to sit in while you supervise the work of men who are still strapped to their one-legged jobs. Management needs men of that sort, and they are hard to find.

CHAPTER 10

IT IS THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

Someone once said that the outstanding man in any field is outstanding because he has two per cent more ability than his competitors. The idea is that even a small difference continually exerted brings, finally, a large difference in results. Like the two per cent interest in the Postal Savings Bank account, it is "compounded annually." The additional two per cent exerted throughout this year brings a two per cent greater success, and next year's two per cent has an advantageous start. Each year starts to build on a wider foundation. Two per cent each year added to your advantage over your competitors becomes by virtue of the compounding more than ten per cent in five years, more than twenty per cent in ten years.

There is another way of looking at this notion that many small differences account for the large differences we have observed in our friends and acquaintances. Use the same arbitrary and fanciful figure of two per cent. Suppose you have two per cent more mechanical aptitude than your nearest rival in the shop. Suppose you have two per cent faster moving muscles, two per cent more intelligence, two per cent more ambition, two per cent

IT IS THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

more knowledge. If these are traits making for success you are better not by a mere two per cent but by ten per cent when all the factors are added together as they are in their effect on your work, your reputation, and your success. You are ten per cent ahead of competition. Perfection, it has been said, is made up of trifles, but perfection is not a trifle. Excellence is made up of small differences, perhaps, but many of them.

When you have been selected for promotion and your appointment has been approved the man who selected you will, as we have said, probably not be able to say just why he picked you rather than another man who seemed to be just about as good. About all he can say in justification of his choice is, "Well, neither is perfect but he seems to have a shade the best of it, all things considered." I do not know how much "a shade" is, but neither do I know how much more intelligence two per cent more really is. We are all unconsciously affected by small differences if those differences run all through the character or are maintained consistently year after year. To have twice the success and twice the salary of your next-door neighbor it is not necessary that you have twice his intelligence or twice his skill or twice his fund of information. Jesse Owens cannot run two per cent faster than his nearest competitor. Bob Feller has perhaps two per cent more speed, two per cent more control, two per cent more endurance, two per cent more "curve" and two per cent better judgment than Jimmy Blatt, pitching as

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

an unknown hopeful in the same league, but Feller's salary is not just two per cent more than Jimmy Blatt's pay.

Here is the importance of what we are trying to say. It does not do you much good to be vastly better than your competitors in one trait alone, no matter how important that trait may be, if you are even slightly inferior to them in a dozen other essential traits. It is about such men that we hear the statement, "Yes, he is a corking good mechanic but—" The "but" refers to the dozen other traits where deficiencies neutralize the one outstanding virtue. This is what makes the program for self-improvement so important and at the same time so encouraging. It is necessary to develop the whole man, but it is not necessary to make immense gains in any one factor. You may not be able to develop yourself into a genius in any one particular, but you can increase to some degree your proficiency in a great many lines by a persistent and well-planned effort over long periods of time. This is what you have been doing or failing to do for the last ten years, consciously or unconsciously. That is why you are where you find yourself today. And by the same token where you will find yourself ten years from now depends on how you make use of the time from now on in developing those many small differences that taken together make up the character of a man. It is only because this is true that we have put so much stress on having a program of self-development. If it were necessary to make

IT IS THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

great strides in order to benefit by our efforts at improvement most of us would not make the attempt, or, making it, would soon give it up as hopeless. But anyone can improve in dozens of ways by a meager two per cent in a year if he but sets himself conscientiously to the task.

It is the little things that count. The *Philadelphia Record* has been featuring a "Fun for All" page for some months, with small prizes for various sorts of contributions, one of which is called "My Greatest Thrill," to be expressed in fifty words or less. It is interesting to see what trivial things can be classed even as thrills, let alone great or greatest thrills. Hubby gets the dinner one day when Mother is late getting home from shopping; a man, married eight years, learns that his wife recently told his mother that she did a good job in raising him; a woman wins a bridge prize when she had felt herself outclassed; a wife hears her husband describe the dress she had on when he first saw her twelve years before. Big things do not happen to most of us. Few of us fly the Atlantic solo. Few of us receive the Nobel peace prize. If we are going to get pleasure out of living it must be from relatively minor events. So much of life is drab and gray and so frequently are our hopes disappointed that when we do have some pleasant experience we are likely to make the most of it and live it over again often in memory or in telling our friends about it.

A bit of praise comes under this head, a word

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

of appreciation for a job well done, credit for a useful suggestion made, a friendly interest taken in our welfare by those in the ranks above us. It costs you nothing to do these things, but the return from them is the best dividend you will get from any investment you may make. Cultivate the habit of giving honest praise where praise is due. Two words are sufficient—"Nice job!" or "Pretty clever!"; even a noncommittal "Oh, boy!" Did your boss ever say one of these things to you? And did you tell your wife about it when you got home? If it means that much to you it means that much to the other fellow. Overdone by a hypocrite it becomes sickening. Done where it is deserved and sincerely, it is without price. It must be done often enough to be natural and to be hoped for by others but seldom enough so it does not lose its value. In general we are so attention-hungry ourselves, so anxious for our own recognition, and so jealous of our own importance we hate to bestow any of these things on others, yet it is one of the surer ways to obtain good will from the group we work with and the men we work for. To be willing to praise a fellow worker's efforts to your boss when a proper occasion offers itself is to gain credit on the books of both. A morsel of kindly recognition is a great lubricant for the running of a group of men. The time to learn the methods of its use is before you are promoted. It helps you to attain the promotion and after you get it to build up the morale and good will of your men.

IT IS THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

And what is morale? I know a plant where wages are among the highest in the trade and morale the lowest. I know another where wages are just at the average for the trade and always have been and morale is so high there has not been a strike in the thirty years' history of the plant. One company has a spiked steel fence eight feet high around the property, and it is so designed that it can be charged with electricity in case of trouble. The other plant has no fence at all but does have a hedge of flowering shrubbery where the fence might otherwise be. In one plant the men are treated as not having feelings worthy of consideration, and in the other they are treated like fellow human beings. Morale is made up of small things, and it can be lost for the lack of things as small.

Think how you feel toward your company and your boss and think why you feel as you do. If your attitude is favorable remember that the things that make you like to work here will be just as important in the eyes of the other fellow. The difference between the favorable and the unfavorable attitude, between morale and dissatisfaction, is based on the presence or absence of factors often considered too small to merit attention. The time to study the effect of these factors on the workers is now while you are one of them so that later you will know their importance to you in the successful administration of your work when you have been given supervisory responsibilities yourself. The "Golden Rule" is neither a dead issue nor an impractical guide for

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

the building of satisfactory industrial relations in this fifth decade of the twentieth century. One thing we all have in common is our emotional structure, our craving for personal recognition, the maintenance of our individuality. You know what it means to you. It means just as much to others.

SUMMARY

Let us briefly sum up the message we have been attempting to deliver up to this point.

First you must decide whether you want promotion enough to pay the price. To help you to make the decision we suggest you put yourself in the boss's place long enough to see yourself as he probably sees you. You can then begin to take stock of yourself, to catalogue your strong points and your weaknesses. Knowing from this inventory what points need building up you may lay out a formal program for a long-term course in self-improvement. It is fundamentally important to come to an understanding of the fact that, whether you like it or not, you get in this life about what you really deserve. This forces a realization that men who are not liked are not promoted. Grouzers are not chosen, but those who have learned to cooperate are. Seeing and solving problems is more important than mere routine skill and knowledge. Personal development and growth bring recognition, and being prepared for the promotion ensures success. And once in the position of supervisor or foreman, with responsibility

IT IS THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

for building and maintaining morale, remember that effective personal relations rest on a multitude of small if not trivial daily contacts.

We are the architects and builders of our own fortunes. Architects and builders make plans and specifications before they start to work. The foundation is laid and the superstructure built upon it. It is not otherwise in the building of character and success.

The object in giving a summary at this point is to point out that what we have been considering thus far is in the field of the personal characteristics of the man who wants to qualify for foremanship. If you are one to whom this applies we can say we have been addressing you in this part with a view to stimulating you to do some self-analysis so you might discover whether you are ready for the promotion and, if not, what you may do to get yourself ready for it.

Now we wish to talk about the job itself and some of the aspects of the job with which you should be familiar and about which you should have some knowledge if you are going to be anything more than a mere straw boss. These things we are going to talk about are things that concern the worker only indirectly, but every foreman has to know about them.

Do not get the idea that the next ten short chapters in any way exhaust the subjects of which they treat. They do not even begin to outline the de-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

tails. There are at least a dozen books in any good library on each of the ten topics. The idea back of our presenting these subjects for your consideration is that by so doing we hope to shed additional light on the foreman's job while suggesting some of the ways in which you may prepare yourself for the coming promotion. You will never have a better chance to post yourself on these subjects. After you have the supervisory job you will find yourself a much busier individual than you have ever been as a worker. Now is your golden opportunity to get books on these topics and master the information they contain. The next ten chapters are merely to let you see how important the subjects are. The treatment is too brief to supply the knowledge you are going to need in any one of the subjects.

CHAPTER 11

APTITUDES, ABILITIES, AND HABITS

Just the very minute you become a foreman you are going to have to start thinking of the men who work for you with two very definite questions in mind—what can this man do, and what are his limitations? Heretofore, as a worker, you have not been particularly interested in these factors of abilities and limitations. You have been interested mainly in what your friends actually do rather in what they could do if put to it to make the effort. You have been interested in how they behave rather than in how far they could be made to behave otherwise if you had control of them. As a foreman you are going to have to be interested both in what they have done so far and in what they can reasonably be expected to do if they are properly aroused to make the effort; because in your foreman's position it is going to be part of your job to get them to do things they have never done before, and you are going to have to try to understand why they behave as they do and to discover how they can be made to behave as you want them to.

If, by some supernatural powers, you were able to tell by looking at a man just how much he is capable of doing, how far he can be developed in any de-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

sired direction, what things he can be taught to do fairly well, what ones he can learn to do excellently, and what ones not at all—and if, in addition, you possessed some magic formula that would set this development in motion so as to stir him up to creative activity—you would be an ideal foreman. Nobody has this power of insight and mastery, though some men and many women think they have. In the absence of it the foreman has to learn to rely on various well-established methods of test and observation to find out what the fellow will probably do under various conditions and in various circumstances, and he must depend on a knowledge of the mainsprings of human nature so that he may induce the man to do other things that may be more desirable.

Two fundamental discoveries are made early in the career of every man who finds himself in a position where it is necessary for him to get others to do what he wants them to do. He learns first that men are somewhat like the automatic vending machines that deliver cigarettes, chocolate bars, chewing gum, music, or a glass of Coca-Cola, when the proper coin is dropped in the proper slot. Second, he learns that if a man is a reacting or responding mechanism of this sort, the thing that determines what response will be made and how vigorous it will be is the emotion that accompanies it and activates it. When he has come to think of a man as a "response machine" he has learned a valuable bit of technique in the handling of people. We said the

APTITUDES, ABILITIES, AND HABITS

man resembles the slot machine in that if you put the proper coin in the machine you get from it what you want, whereas if you present to the man the proper stimulating situation you get the response you want. One word in that sentence is of considerable importance—the word “proper.” Sometimes you offer what you think is the proper stimulus, and yet the response you bring forth is not at all what you expected. This is because you never know all the past life of the man whose work you are directing. A large part of the foreman’s job consists of hunting around for the right stimulus to drop in so as to get out the desired response.

If you knew all the habits a man has contracted from early childhood up to the present moment you would have little difficulty in selecting the stimulus that will bring the action that you want from him. Every stimulus you try will bring some sort of a response. With one man it will be one kind of response; with another man the same stimulus brings a different response. This is because no two men are alike either as to their inheritance or as to their past experience. Furthermore, the same man is not always consistent in his response to the same stimulus. Things that have happened since the last time that stimulus was applied have changed his way of responding. It is because of such variations that leadership is an art rather than a science.

The more experience we have in the handling of men the more we appreciate the importance of both the emotional habits and the momentary mood of

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

the man we are attempting to direct. The mood of the moment is determined usually by things that have happened very recently—within the last few minutes or hours. The emotional habits are patterns of reaction, attitudes toward life in general, most of which are learned in early childhood. One man is aggressive, another submissive; one quarrelsome, another easy to get along with; one happy and another gloomy; one rash and enthusiastic, another cautious and reserved. It is the supervisor's task to observe all these qualities in his men and to handle them in accordance with what he sees.

Rules and the policies on which they are based are aimed at securing some sort of standardization of the behavior of the working force. To bring about this generalized uniformity of conduct in a group in which no two workers have the same temperament, no two have the same past experience, and no two have the same philosophy of life is the management's assignment to the supervisor. Obviously he is going to have to know his men, not as a group but as individuals, because to get uniform results from people who differ as much from each other as this, is going to involve techniques varying as widely as do the characters of the men. One will respond favorably only to praise that would so "turn the head" of another as to make him worthless for a week. One needs to be driven and another flattered and coaxed. One works best in competition with others whereas another is distracted by it and does less well than when he works alone. If all

APTITUDES, ABILITIES, AND HABITS

foremen but realized how thoroughly different men are, one from another, and used their knowledge in handling them, their work would be much more pleasant and their men much better satisfied. Unfortunately most supervisors soon develop a standard method of dealing with a situation regardless of the personalities involved. The same foreman who knows that you cannot use the same cutting speeds on brass and cast iron if best results are to be obtained thinks that to get uniform results from many sorts of men he must use a uniform and unchanging system on them all. The result is unhappy for all concerned, for the worker who resents being treated without individual consideration, for the management who observe merely that affairs in that department are not running satisfactorily, and for the foreman himself who thinks his men are either stupid or hostile and noncooperative.

But suppose the supervisor has learned just how greatly his men do vary in their characteristics and, by handling them accordingly, is getting the most out of them of which they are capable considering the aptitudes and abilities they possess. Is there anything that he can reasonably be expected to do to change his men so that their temperaments, their attitudes, and their reactions will be more conducive to good production? Is the foreman responsible in any way for making his men over, for re-forming their characters so as to make them more desirable workers, or should he take them as they are and attempt to make the best of it just as he does

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

with the materials he works with that have to be used just as they are supplied to him by the management? This is a purely practical question and not one of ethics or religion. Certainly the foreman is not a psychiatrist, a missionary, a preacher, or a reformer. If he should feel it his duty to correct every fault he sees in his men not only would he be too busy to do anything else, but he would probably create more faults than he cured, because none of us is wise enough to be able to live his own life correctly and to the best advantage, and certainly we lack the wisdom and the insight to do it for other people. But there is a responsibility resting on the supervisor so to handle his men that they have both the opportunity and the incentive to alter their own behavior little by little so as to make it conform more and more to the desirable pattern that is aimed at for the group as a whole. In other words the supervisor should give the individual worker every assistance and encouragement that he thinks the man may be able to make use of in so altering his conduct and character as to become a more useful member of the society of which he is a part. The difference in these two ideals of foremanship is that in one, the reforming sort, the foreman tries to remake the man, whereas in the other he so arranges the setting that the man will remake himself.

In this process of analysis and evaluation one of the things the foreman is going to have to take into account is that his men differ as much in ultimate

APTITUDES, ABILITIES, AND HABITS

capacity for improvement as they do in temperament. Whether he is developing a man with the idea of making him his assistant and eventually his successor, or merely to get the best all-round results from him in the job at which he is working, he must first try to make sure the man is of such a sort as to make the development possible. Otherwise disappointments are in store for everybody. Has he the necessary intelligence, the mechanical aptitude, the sense of rhythm, muscular coordination, physical constitution, and vitality? If not, it will not pay to spend time in training him because these are things that a man has by birth and not from learning. There may be many useful occupations for a man with no mechanical aptitude, but no amount of painstaking training on the part of a foreman will ever make a mechanic out of him. So it is well to learn to estimate the degree to which your man possesses the capacity to develop along the proposed lines before undertaking to train him. This estimate may be based upon careful observations under standard working conditions or on tests of the sort that have been developed by psychologists for measuring many common aptitudes like intelligence, musical aptitude, mechanical aptitude, muscular reaction speeds, eye and hand coordination, color sense, and many others.

As a supervisor you are going to have to think of your men in this fashion, not as names on the pay roll or numbers on the time check but as complex individual problems no two of which are alike but

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

all of which present handles by which you may lay hold of them to direct their efforts effectively if you but have the wit to look beneath the surface for them and to recognize them as handles when you see them. In fact, it is this opportunity that foremanship presents for learning more about others than they know about themselves and so developing them to their utmost capacity that gives the job its greatest zest and interest and provides at the same time its greatest reward.

CHAPTER 12

INTERESTING THE WORKER

Before we look into the question of the responsibility of the foreman for building up in the worker an interest in his work let us inquire whether your own work is interesting to you or whether you regard it merely as something to be tolerated because it brings a pay envelope at the end of the week. Perhaps your present job is interesting to you, but you can recall some job that you previously worked at which you found so uninteresting that you did not care to stick with it. What was lacking in the other job that is present in the job you now find interesting? Whose fault was it that the old work lacked interest? Suppose I ask you now to name three things about it that made it uninteresting. I am probably safe in guessing that at least two of the three things you mention as lacking will be included in the following list of factors that usually help to make a job interesting.

First but by no means most important as a factor helping to make work interesting is the pay we get for doing it. Why do we say it is not the most important factor? You think you would certainly lose interest in your job if your pay were cut in two! Would you? Or would you really be losing interest

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

in working for a man who would do that to you? I know a man who is doing what you work at and doing it for nothing and just for the fun of it. Carpenter, machinist, welder, draftsman, filer, pick-and-shovel man, gardener, boatbuilder, bus driver, tin-smith—what job can you think of that somebody does not do in his spare time just as a hobby? Almost any job is interesting, but the conditions that surround the job or under which the work must be done may make any job unattractive. There are things money does not pay for. I know a man who was offered twice his present salary to take over a job that would have deprived his best friend of a living. What would your reply have been? "Not interested." Interest involves a great deal more than pay.

Many a man finds the chief interest in his work to be the fact that it "leads" to a better job. The work itself may be "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable," yet a man may take a vital interest in mastering it because only by so doing can he qualify for promotion to a position with broader horizons and greater opportunities. Call it ambition, if you will, or just common sense. If I am crossing a creek by means of steppingstones I take considerable interest in the stones to which I mean to entrust my weight. There may be better stones in the creek or along the banks, but if they do not form a part of my path to the other side I am not interested in them. Any of us can get tremendously interested in even a routine

INTERESTING THE WORKER

job if we believe that it is a steppingstone to something we would much rather have.

But, as we have seen, many people do not regard their jobs as steppingstones but rather as permanent locations where they expect to spend much of whatever industrial life remains to them. If the job thus carries no interest as a means to an end can it be made interesting in itself? It can if in any way it can be made to reflect credit on the person doing it. In a mail-order house I watched a woman sorting checks into pigeonholes marked according to the geographical sections from which they came. There were checks from the cities and towns and from all the little crossroads villages large enough to have a one-man institution dignified by the name of bank. Her speed of recognition and allocation was so remarkable that I could not believe she had time to observe the name of the bank, let alone the name of the town which in most cases is in very small type. Upon my expressing my doubts my guide stopped her and took from one compartment the checks for a certain section of West Virginia. There were nine checks, and all were correctly placed. I asked her how she did it so rapidly, and she smiled with pride and pleasure when she replied that in the twelve years she had been doing it she had learned to know some of the checks from the reverse side and most of them by a glance which took in no details and involved no reading, merely a sensing of the general pattern, no two of them being enough alike to involve much chance for error for an eye as accus-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

tomed to the work as hers. I asked her what happened when she took her two weeks' vacation and she replied, "They put three girls on to do the work until I get back." Pride of accomplishment! Her pay was no greater than it would have been if she had sorted only half as many in a day's work. She said it was not uninteresting. She liked to watch new banks appear and grow or fade out or merge or establish branches, and she enjoyed seeing new patterns and styles of checks spread from one section to another. But especially was she proud of the fact that she never needed the generous allowance for error which the system permits—one quarter of one per cent—one mistake in four hundred checks.

Job pride is a real factor in job interest, and there are few sorts of work in which some sort of pride cannot be built up. Ask the man who cleans the windows in your shop or your office how he gets them so bright and leaves so few streaks and yet makes so few motions. If you have time to listen he will tell you, and he will display an interest in his work that the boss hardly suspects him of having.

Most of these things we have mentioned come under the head, in one way or another, of helping a man to establish or maintain his self-respect. Unless the job lets you keep your respect for yourself as a man among men it will certainly not command your interest. In fact if you really lose your self-respect you are not much interested in anything or anybody. The worker must be so situated that he can hold his head up in his own community when

INTERESTING THE WORKER

he mentions the work he is doing. If not, he will not only not be interested in it, he will hate it.

Why, after all, should management care whether the worker is interested in his work? A man is hired to do a certain job, and he either does it or is discharged or transferred. Who cares, except perhaps the man himself, whether he is interested in what he is doing or just tolerates it, or even hates it?

Let Mr. Weiss answer. He has been a foreman in a plant in Philadelphia for twenty-six years. He told me the other day that his time for retirement cannot come too soon to suit him. He is just filling in time doing his work each day as well as he can but wholly without any such interest in it as he had twenty-five years ago. The plant is an old-time organization that has not kept step with the changes that have come in modern industry. Other plants in the vicinity have set up production control, time and motion studies, merit rating, credit unions, clean and economical cafeterias, rest periods with a lounging room in which to spend such free time, a ball grounds for softball at noon and after work, and many another device to make life more worth living—other plants have done these things but not the one where Weiss works. In fact the men in my class at that plant showed it, and so did the room where we held the class. Both the men and the room were the dirtiest I have had to put up with in all of the dozens of industrial classes I have held in the last six years. The general opinion expressed by at least half the class was to the effect that it

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

was useless to tell the supervisors about the newer and better ways of handling men until we had had the top management undergo similar instruction. As Weiss put it, "It kills any interest you may have in these things if the big bosses don't show the same consideration to us that they ask us to show to the men under us. If the top guys only knew what it costs them in profits in a year as compared to what they would get if they treated us like human beings, gave us a decent place to work and got our materials to us on time and in the right quantity and of the right quality—say, it would make their eyes pop out! We know it but what the heck! We lost interest in it long ago."

The general feeling of the group seemed to be that it was not a concern one would brag about being connected with—not until a change of management brings a change of policy at any rate. Yet this is a company doing a nationwide business! While I was there the handrail on a flight of five steps from a platform to the ground was knocked off by a truck. When I held my last class there six weeks later it was still off, and the bottom post still stuck up menacingly sharp on top waiting for someone to fall on it during the night shift, I suppose, when he grasps at the railing that is not there. Apparently nobody cares, nobody is interested in doing anything about it. And the classroom was so dirty that I was ready to call on the clothes cleaners each week after the hour and a half session. The laundry also benefited because I had to sit within a foot of

INTERESTING THE WORKER

a high-pressure steam radiator whose valve was locked permanently in the open position with hand-wheel removed and spindle bolted and immovable. Steam was never shut off night or day even though the outside temperature might be, and frequently was, over 70.

I am not relating this to tell my troubles. I am trying to indicate what happens in a plant when top management sets up the "don't care" attitude by its treatment of the foremen and supervisors. As soon as the foremen cease to be interested in such things you can be sure nobody in the plant will show any interest. Just as Weiss says, this plant has no idea what this lack of interest is costing them. The foremen in my class were an exceptionally fine group of men, but they certainly showed less pride in their jobs, their company, their personal appearance, than any other of the many groups I have met in many industries in the state.

And this, we think, answers our question as to whether the foreman should be responsible for ensuring that the workers take an interest in their work. Where there is a genuine interest there will be greater efficiency, better morale, a lower accident rate, less labor turnover, less waste, and lower costs. If this be not part of the responsibility of the supervisors and well worth all the attention and consideration it requires of them it would be hard to find anything that does come under this head. To the man who considers himself a candidate for foremanship I should recommend that he study his own atti-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

tude and that of his friends in his own and other plants to observe how these attitudes are related to interest in the work. He may discover in the process of his study that where management takes conscious steps to ensure this interest, by itself displaying it, and by making certain that the foremen promote it among the workers—that in such a plant morale is high, turnover low, wages good, and production profitable. The importance of this factor is much greater in 1942 than it was in 1922, and it will be greater and greater as the next few years roll by. It is important for the new foreman to keep this trend in mind.

CHAPTER 13

SELECTION AND TRAINING

When you think of yourself in the foreman's position you picture yourself as a sort of minor executive directing the activities of a number of men, assigning them their work for the day or their responsibilities for the month or the year. You may see yourself as an umpire in settling disputes, or as the workers' representative when dealing with management, and as a part of management when dealing with the men. All this will come to pass when you are promoted. You will be, and do, just these things. But there is another function of the job that you must not overlook when you decide to work for a foremanship. And it is wise to take stock of yourself at the outset to see if you have the necessary qualifications or will have to undergo some training in order to acquire them.

You must think of yourself as needing the traits that will make you a good judge of men, a good estimator of their capacities and their teachability, their capacity to learn. And you must examine yourself also in a new light when you estimate your own ability to teach, to impart information, to instruct. For the success of the administrative part of your work often depends upon the effectiveness

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

of your previous efforts as a teacher. And your success as a teacher may be affected by your ability to judge the capacities of the men you try to teach.

Not every foreman in modern industry is consulted in regard to the acceptance of men hired to fill vacancies in his department. Sometimes the personnel department or the employment office hire the men in the front office, and the first the foreman knows about it is when the man is sent to him to be put to work. There seems to be no good defense or excuse for a practice of this sort, but it is not uncommon. In many plants the foreman has at least the power to refuse or reject such a man, and this is as it should be. This does not imply that the foreman is a better judge of men than the front office. It does mean that if you are going to have to train a man, work with him, be responsible for his behavior and his production you ought to have something to say about his selection. Your "reasons" for rejecting a man may be wholly unreasonable, and yet they may be important. It may be purely a matter of the feelings. I once had a veteran railroad doctor tell me that no man by the name of Zilch (he didn't say Zilch but that name will do as well as another) was psychologically fit to work for a railroad. He had physically examined applicants for the road for thirty years, and he never yet saw a Zilch who was any good. A more unscientific statement would be hard to find, or a more asinine one. But suppose he needed a helper of some sort and the front office sent him down an

SELECTION AND TRAINING

intern by the name of Zilch and insisted on his using him. Would young Dr. Zilch get a fair deal in that office? Some of our most powerful motives are illogical. The foreman should have the right to choose, or at least to reject, whether he cares to exercise that right or not. It makes him feel better about it, places responsibility where it belongs, and adds to his prestige in the eyes of those who work for him.

The reason selection has been so generally taken out of the hands of the foreman is not only that it takes too much of his time to do the interviewing, but in the past he has not been found to be a very reliable picker of good men. He has been too easy a victim of the glib talker, too likely to pick the nephew of a friend, too much influenced by the clash or agreement of personalities, his own and that of the applicant. The employment office is supposed to become expert at avoiding these pitfalls. They can set up better filing systems, better interviewing rooms, and better application forms, and they are in a better position to check up on the applicant's statements and his past record. Unfortunately they are often little better than clerks, and their hiring technique is sometimes little better than a perfunctory formality. Often they are too wise in their own conceit to care to look into the possibility of improving their performance by the use of such standard tests as those for intelligence or mechanical aptitude. Often they seem to feel that they have some mystic power or "instinct" for

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

recognizing a good man when they see him or have talked to him for a few minutes, whereas we know from scientific investigations in the field that such instincts do not exist—not even in personnel officers. But if you are going to be a foreman in an organization where such a group compose the employment office you will have to make the best of it. You cannot reform the front office or convert it to your way of thinking. You will have to learn to take what men are sent to you and to do what you can to work them into your organization as useful members of your group.

However you get your new men, you are going to have the job of breaking them in. Try to recall how you felt when you first came to work in your present job. Do you remember how strange everything was then? Do you recall how it was taken for granted that all the things you have since learned about company policies, your relation to other members of the group, whether you could take time out for a cigarette, where to go for lunch at noon, who had authority to give you orders, how much conversation or “kidding” with fellow workers was permitted—how it was assumed that you knew all these things without being told or would find them out for yourself soon enough? Can you recall what your first feelings were about the job? Did you feel from the outset like one of the gang, or were you more or less of an outsider for the first week or so?

Perhaps you were fortunate enough to come into

SELECTION AND TRAINING

a department where the boss took time to show you over his portion of the plant, show you the rest rooms, tell you about the cafeteria, introduce you to some of your future associates with a word about how long they had been there and what sort of work they did. Perhaps he explained some of your rights and privileges and some of the provisions made for your welfare and safety or took you up to the dispensary to meet the doctor and his staff. He may have explained about seniority and told you how you were not entitled to any such rating until you had passed the six months' trial period. He may even have left you as the especial pupil, in a manner of speaking, of one of the older workers with the understanding that you could go to him for any little items that might arise to puzzle you about the plant or your relations to the new work. If so you know what a favorable impression all this made on you and how it made you feel it was probably going to be a good place to work. First impressions of this sort have a considerable and lasting influence on our attitude toward our work. Whether you met with this pleasant beginning in the new job or not you are in a good position to estimate its importance. As a supervisor you are going to have the chance to do this sort of thing—or to regard it as no part of your job and so leave it undone.

Whether or not you care to do this for the sake of making the man's job pleasant you will find it makes your own task enough easier to justify the

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

time it takes on this basis alone. You are going to have to teach this man the things he must learn before he becomes a profitable producing member of your force. By making him feel the desire to become associated permanently with such a company you make it many times as easy to instruct him to the point of profitable efficiency. His intention and eagerness to learn will make him a much quicker learner than he would be if everything about him seemed both strange and forbidding, not to say cold and hostile. You will save yourself as much time out of the instruction period as was lost in the brief time it took to make him acquainted with his surroundings.

You are going to need some of this sort of attention yourself in your new job as foreman. If the man who is responsible for your promotion is wise he will see that you get it, but whether you have it accorded to you or not you will be doing yourself a service to practice it with the men who from time to time come into your department as new employees. When the actual instruction begins two factors are going to be of great importance—the attention of the learner and the confidence he feels in his instructor. Both these things will have been assured by this first day's contacts. Unless you have the man's attention and have built up within him an intent and a desire to learn, your efforts to teach him will be for the most part wasted. In the early stage of your instructing as well as in all later phases of it remember that there is a difference be-

SELECTION AND TRAINING

tween learning a thing and merely learning about it.

First you tell your man as much *about* the job as you think he ought to know. This stage of the instruction is purely in words, a verbal description. Remember that very few people can take in more than three or four items at a time. Do not assume that because you have told him sixteen things in quick succession that from then on he should be held responsible for those items. Human beings are not built that way. His inability to "get" the sixteen items is not evidence of stupidity on his part. Your attempt to hand him such a package and expecting him to retain it all may not indicate stupidity on your part, but it certainly denotes ignorance of one of the fundamental factors of learning. Do you remember how you felt when the boss called you everything this side of "congenital idiot" because you did not absorb all the half-hour's "instruction" he poured over you that first day? That was his fault, not yours.

Practice this sort of thing before you are called upon to put it into use as a foreman. Next time you have to give anyone instructions try this. Tell him three items slowly and distinctly, give him time to repeat them to himself to make them his own, and then say "Got that?" When he says "O.K." say, "All right—what were the three items?" You catch him off base the first time you spring that on him, so do not laugh at him or call him to account if he fails to remember all three of them. What-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

ever he gives back say "Good—some folks don't do so well. Now I will repeat those and add three more." Now he knows he is going to have to hand it back to you, so he gives you much better attention. It may take some time and many repetitions, but do not get impatient. Just remember that you could probably do very little better yourself.

When he has absorbed the description give him a demonstration. Have someone go through the motions slowly while you describe them. By this he gets the picture added to the words. The words tell him what to look for. The demonstration tells him what the words really mean. He still has not learned anything except some facts *about* the task to be performed and that is vastly different from learning to do it.

So now you have him try it himself. Of course he does it wrong. Do not bawl him out for his errors. Praise him for whatever portion of it he did correctly, and tell him to try again to see whether he can do as well again and perhaps add one or two more. Encouragement cuts the learning time. Harsh criticism and ridicule lengthen it.

If you ever become a foreman you are going to have to do a lot of this sort of teaching and training. And every time you do it you learn a little something yourself. Every mistake the man makes is a criticism, not of his intelligence, but of your ability to make it easy for him to learn. You should study each mistake he makes to see what you could have done to prevent it. In time you will have seen

SELECTION AND TRAINING

about all the possible errors made that can be made, and if you have altered your method of instruction each time to prevent that error from cropping up in the next man, and if you keep this up until you have covered them all—well, you will know you have “arrived” at last.

A good time to learn these techniques is now before you become a foreman. Almost any boss will be delighted to let you break in his next “rookie.” If you can get the assignment you kill two birds with the one stone. You get a chance to learn how to teach, and you encourage the boss to think of you as a man who can teach and from that it is a small step to his thinking of you as an assistant in other ways or even as a foreman in your own right.

And the best way to learn is to teach. You will be growing while you teach—and you remember what we said about growing out of one job into the next one above it.

CHAPTER 14

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

More people like to wield authority than like to be responsible for the results that follow the issuing of the orders. If things run along smoothly they are willing to accept full responsibility—and credit—for the success. When things go wrong and the credit turns to blame they are not so keen to assume the responsibility.

When I had my consulting engineering office in Fall River, Massachusetts, the treasurer of a mill was also general manager, purchasing agent, sales manager, and recipient of the highest salary and the most social prestige. He was a member of the Quequechan Club and could take, and did, two hours and a half for lunch. He was usually a member of one of the disintegrating "best families" and had been to Harvard where he studied Latin and the *Lampoon* for four years and tried for but did not make the football team or the crew. This was the treasurer. The superintendent was a man who had worked up from weaver to "third hand" to "second hand" to overseer and then to the superintendency. He knew the mill and the way to run it. He was usually an Englishman and not too fussy about what he did with the letter H. Many a treas-

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

urer's reputation was made entirely by his superintendent. Among those who were on the outside looking in, the machinery salesmen, architects, engineers, bankmen, and lawyers, the saying was current, "If a mill makes money it is because it has a clever treasurer. If it runs in the red it is because it has a poor superintendent." Heads I win and tails you lose. It is skill when you win but ill luck when you don't. If you are going to claim the credit for whatever is right in your department you must be willing to take the blame for what is not. That is what responsibility is. And that is why some men do not care to assume any of it.

We have been looking at the picture of authority with no real responsibility back of it. Much commoner is the reverse situation—responsibility with little or no authority. That is one of the things to take into account before you accept promotion to foremanship. It is not so unusual as we could wish it were to find managements that hold their supervisory force responsible for results without giving them authority to control the conditions on which those results depend. The foreman may find himself responsible for keeping costs down while the purchasing department continues to make low costs impossible by buying inferior or unsuitable materials or tools with which to work. It is responsibility without authority when the foreman does not have the right to reject a man sent down to him by the employment office. It is responsibility without authority when the company's labor contract

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

so ties the hands of the supervisor that he can no longer dispose of his men by transfer or discharge except on a basis of seniority. Responsibility without authority is, like taxation without representation, unjust and in the long run unworkable.

Before you embark on the sea of foremanship you are entitled to know what the skipper is going to expect you to do and what he will give you to do it with. When you sign on for the voyage you become party to a contract, and you have a right to know the terms of that contract. Automatically you assume certain responsibilities, and the company assumes the obligation to pay you for the discharge of those responsibilities. There is no "meeting of the minds" and therefore no true contract unless both understand the obligations involved on both sides.

Firstly, you should make sure that you know who has the right and the power to assign responsibilities to you and who has the authority to delegate to you the necessary powers to discharge those responsibilities. One of the most exasperating situations a man can get himself into is to try to work where many men of many minds are in a position to tell him what to do and how to do it and yet no one of them is willing to stand by and accept responsibility for what happens. A confusion of bosses is a symptom of poor management. I once "accepted" a job in Wisconsin and made sure at the time of acceptance that my only boss would be the general manager himself. When I arrived six weeks later to take up the work I found I had three overlap-

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

ping bosses, and the general manager was not one of them. The company lasted only two years but that was six months longer than I did.

What are you going to be responsible for when you become a foreman and where does the authority that you are going to exercise come from? It is well to have a fairly clear idea of both of these items before you start in.

If the company is well organized it is not difficult to trace your authority back to its origin. When you follow it all the way back, believe it or not, you find your authority to issue orders to your workers comes from the same place from which the President of the United States gets his, and that is the people themselves. By their votes they elect representatives who make the laws for the chartering or incorporating of such companies as yours, and they see to it that someone or some group is legally responsible. It may be the stockholders or the partners or the owners or trustees or board of directors, but whoever it is who is so designated by the law, he becomes the fountainhead of authority and responsibility in that company. Since he cannot attend to every detail of a business he "delegates" responsibilities for portions of it to others, and with each responsibility he should also, and usually does, delegate sufficient authority for the purpose. No two companies are exactly alike in their organizational structure, as we shall point out in Chapter 17, but one good way to find out how your company is set up is to trace back to its source the authority

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

you are going to be endowed with when you start issuing orders as a foreman. It is an interesting thing to do, and it is a wise one to undertake before any misunderstandings have a chance to arise, as they do when this knowledge is missing.

From what we have said it should be fairly clear that there should be no responsibility without the corresponding authority and no authority without a full acceptance of the responsibility for the results of the exercise of that authority. Authority and responsibility are like Siamese twins. Neither long survives the death of the other, and if you attempt to separate them they both die.

Responsibility is an abstract word, and it has little meaning unless we add to it some definite items limiting its general scope. Responsibility for what? What are you as a foreman going to be responsible for? No perfectly general and all-inclusive list can be made because foremanship in one organization may be entirely different from that in another. A supervisor in a mail-order house would not be responsible for the same list of things that would be involved in foremanship in a steel mill. We have asked some of our classes, recruited from various sorts of industries, to list the items each man felt the foreman should properly be made responsible for. We never got a complete list, of course, but in five minutes they had named around thirty very general items. Probably no one foreman would ever be responsible for all the items they named, but it is equally true that they did not men-

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

tion all the items any supervisor might have to be responsible for. Although many of the items are characteristic of a single plant and not found in others, there were many mentioned that are sufficiently broad so that it is safe to say almost any foreman would find them in his list of things for which he is held responsible. I think no management would resent it if you said you wish at the outset to have as complete an enumeration as possible of the things for which you are going to be held responsible, so that you may be sure not to overlook any of them. But if you feel for any reason that such a request would be likely to be misunderstood or that it might embarrass the boss by putting a question to him which he cannot answer I suggest that you do the next best thing by making out a list for yourself. You might head it up with the caption "Memorandum: As I understand it I am responsible for the following things," and then list as many as you can think of such as the following general items and as many more as may occur to you, adding to the list from time to time as new factors develop. For example:

1. Maintaining worker morale.
2. Assigning men to work and work to men.
3. Training new workers in their jobs or old workers in new jobs.
4. Seeing that workers know company policies.
5. Representing workers to management.
6. Keeping men constantly safety-conscious.

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

7. Promoting health and welfare of workers.
8. Making out daily and weekly reports.
9. Developing an assistant to carry on in my absence.
10. Keeping costs down and production up.

There is no use in going further with the listing here; but this gives an idea of what is meant, and it is enough to start you off on a list of perhaps thirty or forty more items before you have them all covered. Such a list should be neatly typed and kept in shape for ready reference. Then if you want your superior to check it over and approve it or add to it and still do not think it wise to make a direct request there are a dozen indirect ways in which it could be brought to his attention. For instance, when he gives new directions that add to your responsibilities you might bring out your tabulation with some such remark as "O.K. Let me add that to my list of duties right now. Let's see. How shall we state that in terms of my responsibility for it?" If he has half the curiosity of a normal human being he will ask what you have there and you dismiss it with an offhand remark, "Oh, just such a list as every new foreman makes out for himself, I suppose—things not to lose sight of. Can you think of any others?"

We have been saying that every man should know exactly what he is responsible for and what is expected of him in its discharge. Obviously every man on the pay roll is responsible for something,

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

or he would not be on the pay roll. It should be equally true, though it rarely is, that there ought to be no duty or operation or task anywhere in the plant without having someone definitely responsible for its performance, for seeing that it gets done. What is everybody's business is nobody's business.

There is one other element in this question of responsibility to be wary of at all times, and that is "fuzziness," lack of distinct demarcation, lack of definiteness of assignment. Such a haziness is sometimes intentional, a device quite useful to the "buck-passer" or the artful dodger. It may prove to be a trap for the unwary subordinate who finds out too late that he was responsible for the thing that went wrong although nobody had ever made that clear before the emergency. Have your responsibilities outlined in definite form and in writing and dated, and avoid the occasional stepping-over of boundaries and the casual or informal now-you-see-it-and-now-you-don't custom of holding one person responsible part of the time and another some other time without a clear division clearly understood by all three parties at interest, the two between whom the responsibility rests and the one who is in a position to hold them to it. Fuzziness may be attractive in a baby's blanket. It has no place in the delegation of responsibility and authority.

CHAPTER 15

MERIT RATING

You are a candidate for promotion. Probably you have had hopes along this line for many months or even years. It is possible you are strongly of the opinion that you have the qualities that the better job calls for, and you may be right. It is equally possible that your boss does not seem to realize it. He may even have appointed as his assistant a man who you think is your inferior, and yet you know this man will get the boss's job if the boss moves up or out before this fellow is shown up as incompetent. It is an annoying situation at best. You are likely to misjudge both the boss and the man he has chosen to advance ahead of you. You are acting as most people do under such circumstances if you get to thinking that the reason this other man was stepped up is that he is a "bootlicker," a toadier who has "yessed" and flattered his way into the good opinion of the boss rather than winning it on merit. And you see as a possible reason for your not having been selected the fact that the boss is probably afraid that if he picks a good man as his assistant the assistant will soon push the boss out of his job. Under the circumstances you can hardly blame him for being afraid to choose you, preferring

MERIT RATING

rather this inferior man who will offer no real competition for his job. This borders on the form of derangement known as "delusion of grandeur and persecution." It is a delusion only if it is not true. It may be true. Maybe the boss is afraid to let you get started in his direction. Maybe you really are far superior to the man he did select. Such things happen often enough to make us careful not to condemn a man as deluded until we are sure his analysis of the situation is all wrong.

It is equally possible, and more often the correct explanation, that the boss has no true measure of merit, no way to get away from, and rise above, his prejudices. He may be biased against redheads, Protestants, Republicans, tall thin angular people, the British, and people who have worked for a certain competitor. Perhaps he could forgive you any one, or even two, of these offenses, but it happens that you are a redheaded Scotch Presbyterian, six feet one and a hundred and fifty pounds, and you voted for Landon and Willkie, and before you came here you worked for the company he dislikes. None of these things has anything to do with your ability to hold down the foreman's job, and the boss knows it and would admit it if each item were put up to him separately. He does not realize what has dictated his choice and his overlooking of you. He just does not like people who are born into families with those characteristics, so he never even considers you as among the possibilities. It is practically impossible for him to be fair to you, hard

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

as he may try to do so. (You probably think that he does not strain himself trying!) The trouble is he is basing his judgments on his feelings and not on his reason—and so are you when you condemn him. Most of us do that; but few of us realize it, and the reason we do not realize it is that we immediately seek out what look like perfectly good reasons to justify our feelings. The only person who is fooled by these “reasons” is the one who offers them to account for his prejudices. I do not know how the chief doctor for the railroad accounts for his blanket rejection of all members of the Zilch family, but he undoubtedly has a “reason” that satisfies him even if the rest of us might smile at it.

As a hopeful candidate for promotion under this boss, what are you going to do about it? First you will size up the prospects for the future by estimating how long this foreman is likely to be in a position to hinder your advancement by his failure to recognize your virtues. If it appears that he will be moving up or out in the near future you can afford to wait, but if he looks permanent or unlikely to move before it is too late to do you much good your best move is to look around for a similar job under a man who is prejudiced in *favor* of tall Scotch Republicans with not too much meat on their bones and with sorrel tops, especially if they have had some experience with this competitor your present boss hates. To be sure, his prejudices will be just as unreasonable and unreasoning as those of your unfriendly boss, but they will work in your

MERIT RATING

favor instead of against you. In the new job under the favorable boss when you begin to be favored and singled out for promotion you will be accused of toadying and "bootlicking" by all the short heavy men of Italian descent with curly black hair, who vote Democratic and go to early mass, especially if they never worked for this competitor.

Another way to avoid this sort of situation is to work for a company that has installed a merit-rating system and has seen to it that the system is properly and regularly made use of. "Merit rating" is a name for a system. Of course every boss thinks he rates his men according to their merits and would be insulted if you accused him of being swayed mainly by his emotions. When we speak of merit rating we are referring to any one of the many forms of objective rating scales. These are printed forms intended to make it possible to judge a man on one trait at a time regardless of the other traits and regardless of whether the rater likes the man or dislikes him.

For example, one of the things a foreman is the better for having is "initiative." He should be a "self-starter" and not require cranking up by someone else to get action from him. Maybe you have lots of initiative, but it does not do you much good if the boss fails to credit you with that virtue because he dislikes you in general. But if someone puts up to him just that one question about you, "Does the man have initiative—does he see things to do and do them without being ordered each time

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

—or does he have to be told just what to do and when to do it and how to do it before he gets going?" the boss is going to have to admit that you do have that virtue even if it is the only one you do have. And if someone then says, "Well, how about his honesty? Have you ever caught him in dishonest actions?" the boss is going to have to say, however reluctantly, "He is honest enough, I guess. I can't think of any time I ever saw him do anything dishonest." Of course the trouble is nobody ever does ask these questions and the ten or twenty others that have a bearing on your general ability and capacity for foremanship. You would be much better off if they did—if you have the virtues. If you do not have them you are safer to depend on favorable prejudices wherever you can find them.

The purpose of a merit-rating system is to confront the supervisor or foreman with just these questions in such a way as to make him consider each trait separately and go on record as to his estimate of how much of that trait you possess—you and all the other men in the group. There are several ways this can be done, and all have certain advantages and certain disadvantages. Let us take a sample trait—likableness. "Do the other men like him?" One way is to assume that since no two human beings are exactly equal in any one trait it should be possible to arrange a list of all the men in the group in the order of their degree of possession of this trait. If there are twenty-five men in the gang the judge has to go over the whole list and

MERIT RATING

make his estimate, not as to how close to perfection any one of them is, but as to how they compare one with the other. It is usually easy to place the top man in the list and the bottom man. "No question about it, everybody likes Ted. You could not help liking him. He is just the kind of a man who makes no enemies and does make a lot of friends." Put him down as No. 1 on the list. At the other end is the dyspeptic sour complaining pessimist who never mixes with the others except to air a grievance or start trouble. Put him down as No. 25. Now sort the others in between. Who is next best to Ted? Who is almost as bad as the professional griper you have put twenty-fifth? As you get near the middle of the list it is neither easy nor important to make close decisions. Number 12 spot is about as good as No. 11 or No. 13. The object is to make as fair a ranking as you can on this trait of likableness and then go on and do the same thing with, say, ability as mechanic, and so on throughout the prepared list of ten to twenty traits. Then the papers are filed away by the personnel department, and three or six months later you do the same thing all over again without consulting your previous estimates. If you are honest, and observing, your guesses will change from time to time as you learn more about the men in your daily contacts with them. It is the average judgment that counts.

This is only one way of many to apply merit rating. The main idea is to force consideration trait by trait, get a judgment, and place it on file. Any-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

thing that tends to overcome the "halo effect" will be satisfactory to use. The halo effect is the sort of thing that we surround a man with when we allow our emotions to dictate our judgments. If we like him without reservations we throw a bright halo around him and see all his traits in the light the halo spreads over him. We see the halo rather than the man. Such a judgment should be prevented by a good objective merit-rating system. Of course no one ever gets entirely away from all prejudice, but a system of this sort makes it possible to overcome some of its effects if one has any real desire to render just estimates, and I think most men do. The chief trouble with this rank-order method of sorting is the time it takes. A quicker way that works nearly as well is to locate each man along a five-point scale such as

Excellent Good Fair Below average Poor

for each trait, sometimes reversing the scale order to read

Poor Below average Fair Good Excellent

in order to get away from the tendency just to run down the left-hand side and check a man on all traits as excellent, or down the other side and rate him as poor in everything. An experienced man in the personnel office can tell at a glance whether a foreman is really rating his men or just checking blanks because he has to. In any event, if you have the traits, would you not greatly prefer to

MERIT RATING

be rated this way than be judged by the emotional scale—all in or all out?

And when you get to be a foreman and have to begin rating your own men it is not necessary for you to wait for the company to adopt this system if they have not already done so. You can get up your own scale, improving it from time to time and keeping your records in your own desk. Or you can get copies of standard rating scales from any one of the many books written on the subject. In fact it would not be at all a bad idea to read some of these books so that when you get to be a foreman you will not do to your men what your boss may have done to you—judge unfairly because of lack of knowledge as to how judgments should be made.

CHAPTER 16

LABOR TURNOVER

Anything that moves a man out of a job can be considered in a sense as a source of labor turnover. It is turnover as far as the job is concerned. If we take six men off the maintenance gang and put them on the production line, and six men off the line and put them on maintenance work there has been no change in total employment and no change in the amount of the pay roll, but there has been a turnover of twelve men just as certainly as though a dozen had been discharged and twelve new men hired. Each of these men has to be broken in on his new work even though he may have had ten years' service with the company. And it costs from \$50 to \$5000 to break in a new man. Part of the cost is for actual instruction, and part of it is in lost efficiency when an experienced man is replaced by a "green" one.

It is clearly to the interest of the company to keep down this item of turnover either from discharge or transfer, but I have known a shortsighted following of the general principle to work a hardship on the employee and on the company too. In this organization everything is based on the "cost per handling," and unit costs are compared in their

LABOR TURNOVER

nationwide plant, one branch with another. In many cases an experienced foreman develops an excellent man to a high degree of proficiency, and his handling costs are proportionately low. The company needs a supervisor elsewhere; and this well-trained man would just fill the bill, but, although no other good man can be found for the job at the time, this supervisor refrains from recommending his man because the last time he did that in a similar situation it took two men to do the work of the one expert, and his handling costs went up accordingly. This he expected. But he did not expect to be called down by the home office for allowing his handling costs to rise as they did and as they must under the circumstances. As a new result now the "turnover" in that foreman's department is going to be low, but the company is not going to get any more good men through any recommendations on his part. And I found that this was the general policy of most of the men in the Philadelphia branch. Self-protection is nature's first law. There may be times when movement in the ranks of an organization is a sign of growth and prosperity.

But the kind of turnover we are thinking about here is the kind from which nobody benefits in the long run. The personnel department is responsible for some of it. Sometimes they hire the right man for the wrong job. Either they do not find out enough about the job or about the man, and a misfit results. Frequently the man himself contributes

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

to the misjudgment by representing himself as other than he is in order to land a much-needed job even for a short time although he knows he is not equipped to hold it for more than a few days at best. Sometimes it is the fault of the foreman for having poorly described the job and the sort of man needed to fill it. When we realize that on the average about half the men hired leave every year from one cause or another and over half of these quit voluntarily we begin to see how important the item may be. In the taxicab business it is often necessary to hire five men during the year to make sure of having one on the job—a turnover five times as great as the number on the pay roll.

Thus most of the turnover is traceable to the instability of the worker himself. It is something for the candidate for foremanship to think about. In an average company one out of every two men leaves every year. Obviously, the man who sticks and wants promotion and is willing to do what is necessary to earn it is almost forced into it by the pressure of new men coming in at the bottom. The man who moves easily from plant to plant never gets to be considered enough of a fixture to warrant promotion. But although the turnover is traceable in such large proportion to the workers themselves it must not be forgotten that the management may be responsible for the conditions that cause the worker to shift. This is still a free country, and labor is free to leave a place where it considers itself ill treated or subjected to intolerable or even merely

LABOR TURNOVER

undesirable conditions. Some companies have a waiting list even in boom times. I know one company that never advertises for help. All they have to do is let it be known among the employees that a vacancy exists, and the employees rush to tell their friends. In one case an employee, in order to get ahead of all the rest of the force, was taken suddenly "ill" and had to go home within an hour after she heard of the vacancy. Within another hour her special friend had applied for the job and got it and the sick girl was all well and back at work with a satisfied grin the next day. This is the kind of company workers stay with and are glad to stay with although the pay scale is not above average for that kind of work—another example of what we have said before, that sometimes other factors are as important as extra pay.

Again, as a candidate for foreman one of the things you have to consider both for yourself and as a means to help reduce turnover in your department after you get the job is some form of in-service training for foremanship among the workers who may wish to be considered for promotion. If the company does not offer the training in the form of classes such as The Pennsylvania State College holds in plants all over the state you may have to take up the work for yourself without outside help. Few people have the initiative and perseverance to do this sort of thing, so if you do have these qualities it may be to your advantage that your company has not yet waked up to this sort of state serv-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

ice. Certainly where the management does provide "preforemanship" classes it helps to hold down turnover, especially after it has been seen that some members of these study groups get promotions. It makes it clear that the company is looking for promotable men, and that is an encouragement to remain and take advantage of the courses of instruction that are provided. In such companies the process goes right on, after the promotion, with classes for foremen to qualify them better for their supervisory jobs and for the next step up in the line of promotion. But if your company does not provide such instruction for you you can still get it for yourself by wide and persistent reading, and when you have secured your foremanship there is nothing to prevent you from making your knowledge available to your men in evening classes or as encouragement and direction in the sort of reading you yourself found worth while. You do not have to be a teacher to do this kind of thing. Once you have aroused interest you can get the group together once a week or once a month and let them teach themselves by means of a free discussion. If your company does provide any such assistance you can hardly expect to receive much consideration unless you take full advantage of the opportunity by attending the meetings and taking part in the discussions. Should you attempt to hold such discussions in your own groups you will appreciate how much this cooperation means to the ones providing the opportunity.

LABOR TURNOVER

In Chapter 9 we suggested the importance of knowing more than one thing, having more than a one-legged stool to sit on. Some companies go out of their way to see that you get such a chance to broaden your horizon. Perhaps once a year they move all men they consider most promising promotional material from their accustomed jobs to some other work of a related sort. When this is done as a group it is called the "flying squadron." Usually this is too much of a disturbance of company routine, so the shift is made by exchanging jobs between two good men, each doing the other's work as well as he can for the two weeks he is assigned to it. Usually both men are pleased to get back to their old jobs even though previously each may have envied the other as "having it pretty soft" or "sitting pretty." This increase of satisfaction on the old job is nothing but a by-product when it does result. The main idea is to acquaint each candidate with something besides his own work, something over which he may one day be called to exercise supervision. It is stupid to expect a man to supervise the many activities in a department when prior to his promotion all his experience has been confined to one process or one type of machine. This gives him the chance at least to "get the feel" of many other lines of work, but of even greater value, perhaps, is the general improvement in morale that results from such a practice.

If every man who desires to be classed as a candidate is permitted to benefit say once a year by this

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

exchange of jobs then every man feels that he can put himself in line for promotion if he cares to. But whether he makes the grade or not he broadens his field of trade knowledge and makes himself by the process just that much more valuable—to himself and to the company. And whether the company does this sort of thing or not you can still do it in some degree in your own department when you get your own promotion. Whatever good effect it has on your men is placed to your credit as a successful supervisor whether or not the management knows how you accomplish it. If it keeps the turnover in your department lower than it is in other departments the comparison does you no harm in the eyes of management. And if it keeps your men from leaving and keeps them happy it makes your own work easier whether management appreciates it or ignores it.

Just a word about transfer of a more or less permanent sort. It is a form of turnover and costs as much as any other kind of shift. If you apply to be transferred from punch-press work where you have been operating long enough to become a real master of the job, perhaps to the automatic screw machines involving work in which you have had no experience, it costs the company two ways—to break you in on the new job and to break in your successor on the old one. Such a change is justifiable only when it is part of a well-considered plan for future betterment, and then the request should be accompanied by a full explanation of its purpose to the

LABOR TURNOVER

management. If you are willing to wait until the transfer can be made with the least inconvenience to all concerned the company will usually be found willing to cooperate. The fact that you are willing to take a cut in your rate while learning is evidence of the seriousness of your purpose. And if they are regarding you as a candidate for promotion they can see where it is to their advantage as well.

Enough has been said to indicate that the supervisor is an important factor in holding down turnover. You know from your own experience that most of the quitting is laid, by the quitter at least, directly at the door of the supervisor. The remarks that the quitter makes about the boss may not all be true, but where there is much smoke there is some fire. The foreman is part of management, and as such it is a part of his responsibility to prevent the hiring of unfit men who are sure to be transients and to do what he can to hold onto the desirable men, for the man's good, the foreman's best interest, and the profit of the company. High turnover is a consumer of profits.

CHAPTER 17

ORGANIZATION

To the man who is not yet a foreman but who has his plans laid with that in mind the various types of organizations in the various plants of the country and the particular form around which his own plant is built are not of vital importance. After all what you are trying for right now is the next step above your present level, and from where you now stand the foremanship about fills the entire horizon. Only indirectly and remotely are you interested in what lies beyond. You have enough to learn about the foreman's job to keep you fairly well occupied for the next few months or years. Nevertheless, like the traveler approaching the next rise in the foothills it is wise to know what lies beyond. The mountains beyond the foothills are plainly visible and are quite obviously directly ahead in the direction beyond the foothills. Does the road through the foothills lead to a pass in the mountains or into a blind canyon? Is there an easier or a better way to get through to the destination on the far side of the range? To translate the industrial situation into the geographical one we might say that the traveler driving directly into the foothills of preforemanship is decidedly interested

ORGANIZATION

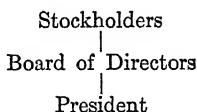
in the organization of the mountains of management that lie beyond.

Just as some territories like the Bad Lands of South Dakota offer a myriad of possible routes through any of which one may go to reach the far side (and in the labyrinth that they form one might easily become fatally lost) and others like the Grand Canyon provide but a single course from end to end, so some companies have many parallel paths from the top to the bottom whereas in others the line of descent is single and direct. In arriving at foremanship you are entering the gates of a territory that lies beyond, and it should be helpful in deciding on the nature of the initial steps to know what effect the start is going to have on the steps that lie ahead, what equipment is necessary for the journey, and whether the path you are about to choose leads to the goal you have in mind.

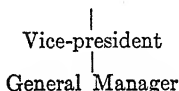
One way to secure this information in usable form is to make an analysis of your own company so as to locate your own position in the organization as well as that of the job to which you aspire. At the top of the page place the title of the highest authority you know of in your organization—president or chairman of the board or the board of directors or stockholders or owner or whatever or whoever has final “say-so” in directing company affairs. At the bottom of the page place your own name. Now, how does the authority get from its origin to you? Who has the right to hold whom responsible and to delegate the authority that goes with the respon-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

sibility? If you can trace this in all its branchings and subdivisions you can chart your organization. Let us say that you learn that the stockholders in your company elect the board of directors who meet to select a president. You would show this succession of levels like this.



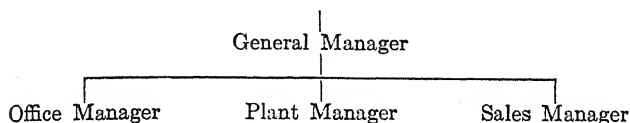
This is fairly direct so far. It may go another step or so without subdividing, depending on the size and type of company you work for. You might have to add:



Or you might find that the president does the work of these two levels as well as his own. But usually from here on down you will find that, although the avenue of authority from the general manager to you is fairly direct, it goes a lot of other places too, to people in other departments, in the front office, out on the road to salesmen, to men and women whose work may be as important as yours although entirely different in character and under entirely different bosses. Perhaps the general manager has directly under him a man to look after all that happens inside the factory, another to see to the affairs in the office, another to get the goods from the factory to the user by way of the sales force. You

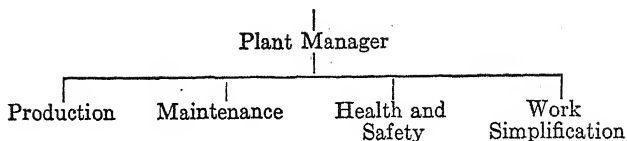
ORGANIZATION

may be able to find several other direct assistants to your general manager, but this will suffice to indicate how your analysis is made. We now have discovered three lines stemming from the general manager, so we will have to devise another way to show the branching. This method, like an inverted "family tree," shows the relationships as well as any.

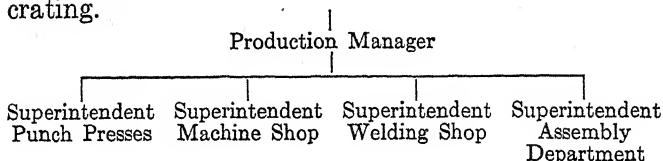


Now let us decide where your department lies. For purposes of illustration we shall assume that you work at a bench in the shop. Your line of descent will then come through the plant manager. You seldom see this "big boss" and never get orders directly from him, so there are obviously stages between you and him. In no two plants will the arrangements be exactly the same. Let us say your plant manager is responsible for production, maintenance, welfare, and work simplification. You might go to your "girl friend" in the office to get a similar subdivision for the office manager also. She might know how the sales manager subdivides his authority, or you might have to extract this information from a member of the sales force. But the method of analysis will be the same, so let us confine ourselves for the purpose of the moment to following your own line down. We now have the plant manager's four subordinate sections.

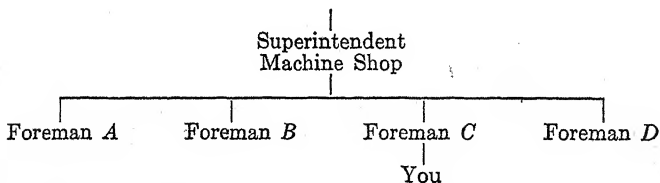
DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?



Since you are in the shop on production work we are tracing down from the production manager. Under his direction you might find a superintendent for each department which, in your plant, might include punch-press work, lathe and boring mill work, welding, and assembly including painting and crating.



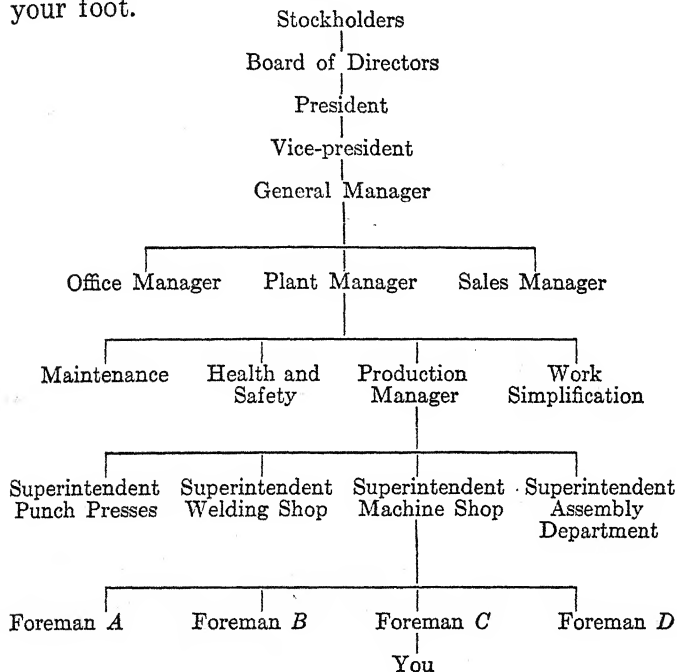
Each of these superintendents has from four to a dozen foremen under his direction, but since you work at a bench in the machine shop we should carry it down two steps farther as follows:



Now if you follow out each of the lines as we have yours and put them all together on a large sheet of paper you will have a chart of your own organization, and on it you can locate the position of every-

ORGANIZATION

one you know in the company. Just to indicate how you do this and how it looks as far as we have carried it out and without filling in the other lines we can assemble what we have here. It makes the scheme of organization and the method of portraying it graphically clear and shows you the ladder on whose bottom round you are just about to place your foot.



Because this sort of organization is direct from top to bottom in its delegation of responsibility and authority without overlapping or division of either at any level it is often called "line" or "straight-

line" organization. It is the simplest form and is usually too simple for large organizations, though it is the commonest form in smaller plants.

As soon as it becomes necessary to have advisory or consulting "functional" departments we begin to depart from the straight line and to get overlapping of authority and responsibility. Thus the personnel division may hire men for the shop and yet not be responsible to the shop manager but stem directly from the general manager. Accident prevention, production control, research, work simplification, rate setting, all may be the responsibilities of divisions not at all under the control of the manager of the department in which they may be working. They cut across all departments. Usually they have no authority to issue orders but confine themselves to plans and recommendations. Since they are responsible for results in their field wherever it may appear in the organization it follows that they must have some way to enforce their rulings. If this provision is not made in the company rules these special "advisors" are likely to become something more than advisors by assuming authority that rightly belongs elsewhere. Then we have conflicts and, at its worst, confusion and inefficiency. Thus the safety man may tell you directly that you will be discharged if you do not wear steel-toed shoes, and your foreman may tell you to forget it because on your job they are wholly unnecessary.

This "functional" type of organization is excellent if division of authority from the assumption of

unscheduled authority is prevented. It has the virtue of putting each special factor of plant management under the direction of a specialist skilled in that one line instead of expecting a general foreman to be skilled in many varied lines all of which in modern industry are highly technical, highly complicated, and highly important. A good advisory "staff" is a great asset. From your standpoint, entering the line of promotion, you can see what we meant by saying it offers many paths to the top. As foreman of lathe workers you may become, by co-operation, especially well versed in the safety work or the time-motion study campaign, and so branch out into that field and rise through their ranks instead of the direct machine shop route.

No plant is perfectly organized. Most of them have "just growed," like Topsy, and are a conglomeration of line and staff and committee, and even a dash of the "cooperative" movement may creep in. This is not a treatise on types of organization and their virtues and defects. It is merely a suggestion to you that you can make an analysis of your own organization, place your job in it, and by knowledge of what lies above and beyond chart your future course a little more intelligently.

CHAPTER 18

PLANNING

I was in a plant last month where the foreman of the welding section was laughing at his own management. He said that for several years they have made only about fifty of a certain standard product each twelvemonth, a product that goes into almost all plants regardless of their nature. In the rush of "defense" work they received a hurry-up order from one factory for four hundred of these devices, which take perhaps a month to fabricate from the raw material. He had just received a pleased order from the front office to go ahead and make the four hundred as soon as he could. He replied, "Fine! What'll I make 'em out of?" They asked him what he thought the storeroom was for and why he had stock requisition blanks.

With infinite patience and weariness he returned the information that he was not sure under the circumstances just what they were for but he did know that there was not enough stock on hand to make six and it might take three months to get enough to make six more. He asked how long they had been dickering over this order with the customer, and they admitted it had been "in the air" three months at least. He asked when shipment had been prom-

ised and they said one hundred and twenty by the end of the year (this was June) and the balance of the four hundred by the end of June next year. When he asked what they purposed to use as tools to make them that fast they told him to come up to the office. He does not know what they planned to do to him up there, but apparently if they did have a plan to do something it was the only plan they could boast of. Anyway they learned from him what they should have known before, that if you are going to make things for defense or for any other purpose you have to have something to make them out of and something to make them with. And if you are to have them ready at a certain time you will have to have things on hand to start the job and coming in after that fast enough to keep it going.

This mixup, he told me, was not unusual. He said he had been working there twenty-six years and they had been making this device for nineteen of those years, and he had never known them to vary their standard of supplies sufficient for the routine fifty per year. If they received orders for more than fifty someone had to wait. If they received less it merely meant accumulating an inventory of fabricated articles. They seemed to have no way to alter the stream of supplies in advance of the production changes and fluctuations. It was not for lack of funds or storage capacity or of knowledge of the cyclical ups and downs of production. They merely lacked any sort of production control, anything resem-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

bling a planning department. Perhaps you have seen similar things happen in your own plant? It is not so unusual as we might like to think it is.

In the last chapter I suggested that making up a chart of your company's organization might make it possible to lay out a more intelligent plan for your own career. I might have called attention to the fact that almost nobody ever does plan his own career. For most of us chance determines everything. We get a job. We hang onto the job until another comes along that offers a little more money. We keep that until we fight with the boss or get laid off. Then we land another job—any job. Yet we smile at this company we have been talking about because they take an order for four hundred units without bothering to plan out the steps that necessarily precede even "beginning to start to commence to get ready" to manufacture them. It never seems to occur to us that planning is as essential to a successful career as it is to the conduct of a successful business. The management of this plant excuses itself by saying that no one can foresee that after eight years of an average of fifty per year a sudden four hundred is going to descend upon them from out of the blue. And we make the same excuse by saying that in the uncertainties of modern life nobody can plan his future and expect to carry out the plan without deviating from the blueprint.

Both excuses sound convincing, but neither means a thing. To begin with, any child could see the defense boom coming a year or more before it came

PLANNING

to a focus. Secondly even if no one could have foreseen it the planning in this plant should have been well enough coordinated so either of two things would have resulted. Either the order would have been trimmed down to the plant's capacity, or the capacity would have been ready for the order when it came. Planning is not foreseeing every emergency. It is outlining and setting up a system that expects the unexpected and can take care of it when it arrives. The field marshal prepares for victory, but his plans include a full schedule of movements to be called into use if his troops are defeated. In a perfect plan there are no emergencies because the devices for meeting all possible contingencies will have been included. It includes thinking of things that may happen so as to have a plan to meet them if they do happen. At the time this order for four hundred was under consideration such a planning office would have found out where the necessary materials could have been gathered in—some here, some there—and either the machines for making the product or suitable substitutes for them would have been located or places lined up where the work could be farmed out.

And in our own life planning we do not have to abandon all such efforts because we cannot hold the world to our specifications. We can say that with things as they look now we shall follow such a course, but if things change in another direction we shall do this instead, and if the change is in some other direction we shall do something entirely dif-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

ferent. If things in my department go on as they are going I plan to be ready for the next promotion, which ought to be along in about eighteen months. By that time I shall have finished my course in blueprint reading and shall be fairly well grounded in the work of all three parts of our department. But if the boss dies or moves up or quits within the year I shall ask for the promotion on reduced pay until I can get the job and my studying in shape to take over properly. And if in the meantime I am offered a foremanship elsewhere I shall turn it down unless it is with a certain company and with certain provisions for promotion and security. And if business falls off so that the promotion is not available within the eighteen months I shall ask for a temporary transfer to Department 16 so as to be better prepared when it does come.

Without these ifs and buts no plan is flexible enough to be workable when there are so many factors over which no one has control—and in this life there always will be such factors. Nothing human is ever wholly predictable. It is proper planning, whether for the individual or the company, only when the unexpected is provided for. This sounds a bit like the farmer who said "The hog didn't weigh as much as I expected and I didn't think he would." It is not so contradictory as this. It is merely laying odds on possibilities. Plan No. 1 is a ten-to-one shot. But plan No. 2 is ready in the off-chance that plan No. 1 is thrown out by that one-out-of-ten eventuality. But plan No. 2 is only a three-to-two

PLANNING

bet so we have plans No. 3 and No. 4 in reserve whichever way it may turn out. With such planning you are not taken by surprise or thrown out of your stride. Quite a lot of planning is hedging against off-chances that may never materialize.

If your company has a central planning board, and most large corporations do nowadays, the details of ordering and requisitioning will be lifted off your shoulders when you step into the new job. Even so you must be prepared to do a great deal of constructive planning for your group if you do not want to be caught in the awkward predicament of not being able to handle work your group should be able to take care of comfortably. For the long look ahead you will have to plan to have men trained to handle work that may develop next month or next year so you will not be "caught flat-footed" when it does come. You must arrange machines so they can be put to unexpected uses. You must balance your group so you will have experienced men in all necessary lines so they can break the others in when the time comes—men who can do things that no one else in the group can do, including yourself. You must plan a job analysis for any job that may come up in your department so when it does come up you can with only minor changes put up a comprehensive report on what is needed. You must be developing an assistant for your own job so the work will not suffer if you are moved up, transferred, taken sick, or just off on a vacation.

For the short pull planning is just as necessary.

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

To come into the plant at eight in the morning not knowing what you are going to do or what you are going to assign to your men demoralizes the whole group and makes for inefficiency through snap decisions, compromise assignments, reversals of ill-considered orders, and loss of time while men wait for their turn to be put to work. The necessity for planning tomorrow's work today is what we meant when we spoke of the fact that the foreman is often at work long after his men have gone home. It is often true that not until today's work is out of the way can tomorrow's work be planned and assigned. Where some form of job card is assigned to each man it is a great saving of time and preventive of loss if tomorrow's cards are in each man's pigeonhole before you leave tonight. Thus planning for even a day in advance has to anticipate the things of the future. Furthermore there must be a certain degree of flexibility and leeway. If the work does not go exactly as planned—and when did it ever do that?—you do not have to stop all your own activities while you get things going again. Good planning even for tomorrow will provide enough alternatives waiting to be used at a minute's notice.

It makes no difference in another respect whether there is or is not a centralized front-office planning agency. If nobody else in the plant is wise enough to work up a planning system for his own use and you are, it will make your work run so much more smoothly and with so much less apparent effort that the comparison with the unplanned work of others

PLANNING

is bound to reflect some credit on your management ability. And since planning and budgeting of time are different names for the same thing your habit of planning ahead will enable you to schedule your days, hours, and minutes to so much better advantage that it will be as though you had found an extra hour in each day which you do not have to share with others. You sometimes hear it said about a rich man whom everyone is envying, "Well, there is one thing he has no more of than I have and that is time." But making better use of time is equivalent to having more of it. When your time is budgeted your reports are in on time, your appointments kept, your minutes "filled with sixty seconds' worth of distance run" and not a futile forty-five seconds resulting from trying to crowd in an impossible sixty-six seconds. Planned work is busy and may be fast. It is never rushed or feverish. Time and motion studies resulting in work simplification yield perfect examples of planned action giving greater production with less effort, less lost motion, and less fatigue.

And for its effect on you and your work, it is probably safe to say that the only sort of a job that wears us out is one that is too big for us. It is worry that destroys good digestion. Hard work without worry merely creates a healthy appetite. A well-made and well-executed plan is an antidote for worry. Worry is an attempt to do something when nothing can be done, to stave off something that must be done, to do two or three or four things at

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

once or in the time one alone would require. Worry is the result of conflict—without and within. Unplanned work, whether by the individual or the corporation, is work that is full of conflict, confusion, stress, and worry. Planned work and budgeted time make for relaxation. It is impossible to worry and still remain relaxed. Planning of work and budgeting of time give one a sense of competence and mastery. The planner rides his job. The one who leaves it to the chance of the moment is ridden by his job. One remains calm and even tempered. The other becomes irritable and quarrelsome, quick on the trigger and inefficient. Each affects his men according to his temperament and mood. And if we add to the boss's reflected effect the fact that the men themselves are bothered by not having their work planned for them, we have conditions that are not pleasant to work under. Morale is low, tempers are on edge, disagreements, quarrels, and even fights are common, and work suffers in both quality and quantity. Such being the case how is it possible that in this day and age any company can be without a competent planning board? Unbelievable, isn't it? But no more so than that with equal knowledge, equal need, and equal opportunity you have heretofore not thought it worth while to plan your own life and your own career.

CHAPTER 19

GRIEVANCES

First let us get clear in our minds what we mean by grievances when we speak of them in connection with the relations between a foreman and his men. There is no dictionary definition that limits the use of the word to just what we understand by a grievance as it develops in the group under a foreman. The large matters of general concern to all employees are grievances considered as issues between management and the collective bargaining agency for the workers, but these things are out of the province of the foreman of a section such as we understand you are slated for. In general, then, a grievance is a personal thing, affecting usually one man or a small part of a section. If the whole section is involved it usually is beyond the scope of the foreman's power to settle, and it goes higher.

What is the difference between a grievance and a difference of opinion? Although the grievance may or may not involve a difference of opinion it does have two elements that are not necessarily accompaniments of differences of opinion. There must be a sense of personal injustice or wrong, and it must have generated a certain degree of exasperation or animosity. I think to most of us there

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

seems to be included also a time element, an element of repetition. It is a distinction based on custom rather than on the dictionary, but I think we should not say that a worker came in with a grievance if he had just found the car of one of the foremen in the parking space marked with this worker's name and perhaps paid for by him but at any rate reserved for his use. We might say that he had a legitimate complaint or "kick" and that he was justified in registering it. It would become a grievance if the same thing happened two or three times the following week without explanation or adjustment.

The essence of a grievance seems to be that it piles up. In a grievance situation five and one do not make six, they make ten. Five and one make six in the realm of reason, but in the realm of the feelings one more added to an already exasperating five occurrences makes things just twice as bad as they were before. Grievances are the cumulative results of repeated aggravations. I do not know whether the old legend is true that the Chinese have a strictly Oriental way of torturing a victim by a continual striking of the sole of the foot with a light bamboo strip not much longer than the palm of the hand. A few blows with this would hardly attract attention. Kept up for half an hour it might be extremely annoying, and kept up for a day and a night without intermission it would, I feel sure, justify the victim in declaring that he had a grievance. It has all the characteristics we require in

GRIEVANCES

our definition. It is an aggravating repetition of something unpleasant which becomes intolerable only by virtue of its repetition. And it is something that in and by itself is too small to seem to be worthy of the disturbance it can cause when the repetition has continued beyond the point of reasonable toleration.

This slow generation of emotional strain or pressure is what makes the handling of grievances an art, and an art of considerable importance. Since a grievance in its fully developed form is a highly emotional fester, and since emotion may be described as a stirred-up state of the organism, if the art is lacking and the grievance is mishandled it has not only not been helped, it has been increased in intensity in direct proportion to the amount of additional stirring up that has been caused by the treatment. Never for a moment should one forget that a grievance is a complex emotional disturbance in which reason has long since ceased to play an appreciable part. It must not be confused with a logical difference of opinion that can be settled by assembling reasons pro and con and then rendering a judicial decision based on the rules and regulations that bear on the case as is done in the chamber of the Supreme Court at Washington.

Recall some of your own grievances of the past and what happened before you decided to have a showdown. You stood the annoyance about as long as you thought the circumstances warranted, and then you decided that if this happened again you

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

would "go to the mat with them and tell them a few things" even if it cost you your job. That is the way we work ourselves up to the popping point. It did happen again, and you did tell the boss exactly what you thought of the whole situation—but this time only in imagination. You spent so much of your emotional pressure rehearsing your story and rehashing it with improvements that most of the punch was gone and all the ripeness of the opportunity. But when it happened once more no rehearsing was necessary, and before you had time to cool off you sailed in and poured out the story, profane trimmings and all.

What did you expect the foreman to do? What did you hope he would do? What, in fact, did you go in there to goad him into doing? You expected a fight, a wrangle, a verbal "knock-down-and-drag out." The way you expressed yourself, the harshness and extravagance of your criticisms, the anger of your attitude and tone of voice, all these were brought into use for the sole purpose, though you may not have realized it, of making him as angry as you were. Why would you do such a thing when what you wanted most was a fair settlement? Well, you wouldn't. But by this time what you wanted most was a showdown in which, at least for the moment, you would have the upper hand instead of being in the usual subordinate position.

What you want most in such a situation is superiority, victory, satisfaction. You feel you have been on the receiving end long enough, and now

GRIEVANCES

you intend to let him have it for a change. The mechanism you use is fairly simple even though neither you nor the boss recognizes what is happening. When you go into his office you know you are at a disadvantage. You are on strange territory, and he is on his home grounds. You are excited, and he is calm. You are an employee, and he is a boss who can fire you if he sees fit. You have no such handle to get hold of him with. Long habit has made him dominant and you submissive to the extent that in the past he has given and you have received orders. He has the prestige of a title, and you have none. On every count you know you are at a disadvantage. There is only one way you can even things up, and that is to fix it so you are both on the same level. Since you cannot make yourself his equal all in a moment in any one of these particulars, and you know it and he knows it, you have but one alternative and you take it. With neither of you quite sensing it you can bring him down to your level and make him throw away all his advantages if you can make him as angry and therefore as unreasoning as you are, just as a boxer loses his advantage in the ring when he loses his coolness and is goaded into a display of temper.

When you are both angry it is no longer a worker addressing his foreman. It is man to man with all distinctions swept away. He unconsciously allows you to determine the rules of the melee because you have had ample opportunity to rehearse the whole situation and put up a story that plays up all your

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

strong points and sweeps away the few that he may be able to bring up in his less complete familiarity with the affair. Once he lets you get him at this disadvantage about all there is left for him to do is to assert his official authority and order you out of the office and back to work "or else." It is a weak ending for him and no settlement for you, but it is the way many a grievance is handled. Since "nothing is ever settled until it is settled right" the whole thing is bound to arise again and next time with less chance than ever for a sensible settlement.

We have been seeing how you brought the foreman down to your level, cost him his dignity, his prestige, his control of the situation, and lost for both of you a little of the good feeling you previously had for each other—and gained nothing for anybody. Now we are going to make you the foreman and expect you to handle one of these angry fellows when he comes in with his bottled-up rage to demand the settlement of a grievance he has stood a little longer than he thinks anyone ought to have to stand it. How are you going to keep the advantage over him that you had when he came in? The answer, in words, is simple and plain enough but in practice not so easy unless you know how—keep your temper! If you can keep your temper you can keep the situation completely under your control. You can do all the many things that the books and articles on handling grievances tell you to do. They are all good art if you can apply them, but you cannot apply them if you are yelling at the

other fellow and shaking your finger or your fist under his nose and telling him places to go to spend eternity.

If you keep your temper you can do all those artful things you are told to do, and they will work. First you listen with real interest and close attention, and by ignoring the provocative trimmings you try to separate the wheat of the complaint from the chaff of injured feelings. It does help, as you have been told it does, to say after the first storm is over and before the second begins, "Now, wait a minute. Do I get this right? You say so-and-so and such-and-such. I did not just get that part about how this started. Suppose you go over the whole thing again so I am sure I have it in order." That helps because it tends to bring him up to your level instead of allowing him to pull you down to his. It helps because nobody can repeat the rehearsed angry performance in the face of a calm atmosphere and have it retain all its primitive beauty. It loses force upon being repeated. Furthermore when the rehearsed script is no longer followed the man is likely to say some things he left out the first time, which were left out because he recognized that they did not strengthen his case in any way. And there is good psychological warrant for getting this repetition. In the process of "shooting the works" in the rehearsed version most of the energy back of the original emotion was spent. It does not remain intense enough to cover the second recital unless it is renewed and regenerated by prov-

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

ocation from the opponent. By the end of the repeated version what little of the original pressure remained has been completely dissipated, and your man is talking about as calmly as you are, and then there is a chance for a settlement on the basis of logic, reason, and common sense. Remember emotion is contagious, but so is calmness.

Easy to say but hard to do—keeping your temper when all about you are losing theirs? Not at all hard to do. All you have to do is to think of some muscles and keep them from tightening up. Four sets of muscles will do the trick for you—those around and between the eyes, those of the lips, the jaws, and the arms. If you keep these relaxed you cannot get angry. My classes in foreman training have had quite a little fun at my expense over this magic formula. It usually comes up for discussion about the middle of the sixteen weeks' course, and at the end of the series two months later they are still throwing this phrase around as though it had a comic-strip quality about it that greatly amuses them—"You must relax"! I enjoy their enjoyment as much as they do. I know that sooner or later they will try it and be amazed at the results. I have met some of them a year or two after the courses were finished and have had them tell me that it was the most valuable single item they got out of the sixteen sessions, that that by itself was worth all the time they had put in attending the classes. They have told me that others in the plant agree that since "You must relax" had come to mean

GRIEVANCES

something other than a jibe and a jest a really noticeable change had taken place at the supervisory level and that it was beginning to be reflected in the men as well.

In all this one must not forget that the essence of handling grievances is in seeing that a just disposition is made of them and that the trouble, if real and justified, is smoothed out or removed. The "follow-up" is as important as the technique of handling the explosion itself. No amount of relaxing on the part of the foreman removes the grievance if it is real, but it does help to pave the way for a satisfactory adjustment when the "follow-up" has shown the proper answers in the calm light of an unemotional consideration by all parties concerned.

CHAPTER 20

LEADERSHIP

Omar Khayyám is supposed to have said something that when translated read somewhat like this:

"I, when a youth, did eagerly frequent
Doctor and saint and heard great argument
About it and about, and ever more came out
At the same door where in I went."

I think he was referring to arguments about religion, but I could say the same thing about leadership except that I should have to substitute "old man" for "youth" in the verse. I have taught many classes of foremen and others of "preforemen," and I have read a book or two on the art of leadership and an article on the subject here and there, and I still do not know just what traits the leader has that I do not have. All these articles and books list the traits of leadership, but it interests me to notice that no single one of the traits seems to be necessary. Name any trait in their lists, and I can name an undoubted leader who lacked that particular trait. What makes one man a good foreman and another a failure has not been isolated in the psychological test tube, probably because the term foreman is so general and covers such a vast variety of jobs and

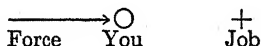
because any one of those jobs can be filled satisfactorily in a wide variety of ways.

A gang boss on a construction job in Texas and a supervisor in a telephone exchange in Boston are certainly radically different creatures, yet we call them both supervisors and say they must both have some of the qualities of a leader. It is less simple when you attempt to name those qualities one by one and then try to find one on the list that is possessed without exception by leaders in politics, in the army, in the gang, in a mail-order house, a steel mill, a ladies' sewing circle, a church, and a lynching party. Perhaps we are trying to use one word to cover too many things. Perhaps if we confine ourselves to an effort to describe some of the things that may help a foreman—the majority of foremen—we may be on more solid ground than when we venture into broad generalities about "leadership." Take a moment to consider this fact: Christ and Hitler can both be classed as having "leadership."

Perhaps as useful a service as we could perform would be to distinguish between leading and driving. Leading is some form of inducing others to want to do what we want them to do. Driving is making them fear not to do what we tell them to. Dr. Kurt Lewin, now at the University of Iowa, was at Stanford while I was there. He has a very interesting way of diagramming psychological matters of all sorts. One of his methods seems to me to shed considerable light on this question of leading as compared

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

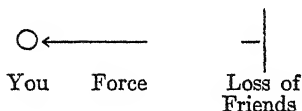
to driving, although neither term is mentioned in his work. Dr. Lewin considers things about us as having what he calls "valences." If a thing is attractive it has a "positive valence." If it repels us it has a "negative valence." The same thing may be either positive or negative as other conditions change. Thus in a cold room in winter an open fire in the grate has a positive valence because it attracts us. In a hot room on a hot midsummer day we wish to get away from it. Its valence is now negative. His diagrams for these conditions are fairly simple. Let us attempt to diagram your situation now that you are thinking of offering yourself as a candidate for the foreman's job. We should represent you by the circle in the diagram. Since the foremanship is attractive it is represented by a plus sign, and we have the picture of you in the presence of an attracting situation and impelled, as indicated by the arrow, to go toward it.



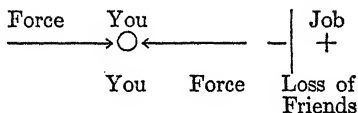
If there are no other factors involved you will move toward the job just as a marble moves when it is pushed by your finger, unless or until some opposing force rises to block the motion. Suppose, as you are impelled toward the goal, certain barriers arise that are distinctly unattractive and tend to turn you in the other direction. They come between you and your goal and tend to push you away from it. For example you may learn that if you take the

LEADERSHIP

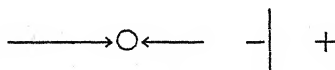
job you will have to give up all your social ties with your old pals in the department. That is a distinctly unpleasant thought. Instead of having a positive valence it is definitely negative. If we represent this barrier by a line across your path and the arrow as pushing you away we have this picture:



Now suppose we put the two pictures together and see what we get.



You are acted upon by two forces, one toward and the other away from the goal. Whichever one is greater will determine your behavior. If the job means more than the friends we shall have this picture, and you will take the job.



If they are exactly equal you can make no decision until something happens to alter the forces on one side or the other. It is at such times of equal impulse in opposite directions that we become upset and emotional over our inability to choose.

Now suppose we have the original situation

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

again. You are attracted to the job and are moving toward it.

—————→○ + Job

Then you meet a girl down at the shore, and she wants you to take the following week off and stay down there with her, surf bathing, taking in the concerts, strolling along the beach in the moonlight. There is nothing repellent about that. It has a high "positive valence," but it impels in the direction away from the job.

Girl + ○←—————

You know that if you stay away from the shop for a week with no better excuse than this you can kiss the foreman's job good-bye. We now have two good things impelling you in opposite directions.

Girl + —————→○←————— + Job

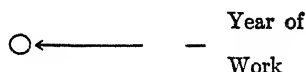
If the girl and the job look about equally attractive you are in for a bad half hour. As long as the two arrows remain equal you will make no decision, and you will remain badly disturbed emotionally. Probably the trouble is that the law of nature decrees that forces of attraction get much stronger as we get much nearer the source. A magnet pulls a piece of steel four times more strongly at a half inch distance than it does at an inch. The advice of an old man then would be to reduce the pull of the girl by putting distance between you so the pull of the job will predominate as this diagram shows.

Girl + —————→○← + Job

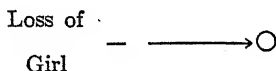
LEADERSHIP

If you can effect this unbalance you will go back to the job. That is what "making a choice" is—making one impelling force greater than the other.

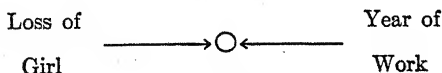
There is still another possibility for striking a disturbing equality of impulses, this time with both negative. Suppose you have stayed with the job but have met the girl several times since, in her home in the city, and you are now asking her to marry you. She says she will if you will first get the foremanship. You tell her that means wait a year during which you attend night school three nights a week and study the other three so you could see her only Sundays for a year. Under the circumstances a year of work and study carries a strongly negative valence for you.



But she is sensible and practical and says, "Work a year for the promotion or find yourself another girl." Either alternative is definitely unattractive, negative in valence.

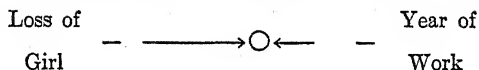


We have again the situation of opposing forces, but now instead of both being attractive both are repellent.



DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

You want to get away from either alternative. If one choice looks as bad as the other the arrows are again equal, and again we have an emotional disturbance that will last until one side or the other gets more unattractive or less so. Thus the girl may say she is going abroad for a year of study herself, and you could not be together anyway. She promises to marry you when she gets back if you have done your part by taking the year at night school. The year of work now looks less forbidding and there is no doubt you will "choose" to go through with it. The arrows show what has really happened.



So much for the Lewin technique of showing graphically how we are impelled this way and that through life by things about us becoming positive or negative, attractive or repellent. What we are interested in is how this applies to our notions about modern leadership as compared with old-fashioned driving methods. The difference, as you may have suspected by this time, is in the use of positive and of negative valences to cause a "choice" to be made or a line of action to be determined. And since the valence is determined by what takes place inside the individual it seems plain that we shall find our greatest difference between leading and driving right inside the person led or driven.

The leader, as we understand him, makes no direct use of negative valences. He does not threaten,

LEADERSHIP

and he does not invoke fear and hatred. He uses positive valences only. This means that he so sets up the situation under his control that the things he wants done are made to look sufficiently attractive so they take on positive valences in the eyes of the workers. Believe it or not, it is possible to make work attractive. It is possible to make people want to get at it and get into it. There is such a thing as joy in work, and there is such a thing as pride of workmanship. The mess sergeant does not have to lead or drive his company to their meals. All he needs to do is yell, "Come and get it!" The positive valence does the rest. So the leader is one who does not have to supply pressure from behind to make his men do their work. He sets up the picture by means of pleasant surroundings and attitudes, adequate reward in pay, interest in visible results, appreciation for accomplishment, enhancement of self-respect and prestige so that the worker drives himself. He works because he *wants* to. He works, but it is more attractive to work than not to. We call that leadership.

Its opposite is based on the concealed whip, the ever-present alternative "or else." We work under such conditions because we fear not to, and the fear is stronger than the distaste. Both are repellent, but the slave driver makes the threatened alternative more repellent than the work. Probably half of Germany works on this basis today to feed the war machine—not because they want to but because they fear not to. In either case men act, they do

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

things, they work. The difference is internal, emotional. And in time the emotion affects the work. A worker who works because he finds work attractive is a better worker than the one who dreads and hates it but fears the consequences if he does not work. The leader is merely the man who makes his purposes attractive.

The issue as to whether the world will be moved by positive or by negative valences for the next hundred years is the issue of the present world-wide battle between democracy and totalitarianism.

INDEX

A

Alibi, 7, 34
 Aspirin, mental, 19, 21
 Assistant to the foreman,
 16, 103, 110, 141

B

Bad Lands, 129
 Bias, 12, 41
 Bible, 19, 54
 "Breaks," 38
 Buck-passers, 34, 56

C

Character building, 31, 59,
 72
 Check sorting, 89
 Chinese torture, 146
 Complacency, 8
 Conceit, 20
 Credit stealing, 58

D

Delusions of persecution,
 113

Diagnosis, 113

E

Emotional habits, 30, 81
 Emotional immaturity,
 28
 Extravert, 4

F

Fall River, 104
 Feller, Bob, 71
 First impressions, 99
 Flying squadron, 125
 Franklin, Ben, 30
 Fuzziness, 111

G

Grand Canyon, 129

H

Halo effect, 118
 Hitler, Adolf, 155
 Honesty, 116

DO YOU WANT TO BE A FOREMAN?

I

Inferiority complex, 11, 21
Initiative, 115
Introvert, 5

J

Job pride, 90
Judges of character, 12, 96,
97

K

Khayyám, Omar, 154
Knockers, 57

L

Landon, Alfred M., 113
Lewin, K., 155
Likes and dislikes, 43, 117
Lincoln, Abraham, 42

M

Mental aspirin, 19
Morale, 37, 40, 75, 109,
144
Mussolini, Benito, 36

N

Nelson at Trafalgar, 14
Nichevo, 26

O

Owens, Jesse, 71

P

Painkillers, 19
Pennsylvania State Col-
lege, 123
Personality development,
55
Philadelphia Record, 73
Philosophers, 10
Pleasing personality, 43
Portland, Oregon, 67
Praise, 74
Preforemanship, 124, 128,
154
Problems, recognition of,
17, 45

R

Railroad doctor, 96
Rating scales, 24, 117, 118
Relax, 152
"Response machine," 80
Responsibility, 3, 83, 93,
104
and authority, 104
not always desired, 3
reasons for avoiding, 3-7
Restaurant worker, 67
Russian nichevo, 26

INDEX

S

Two per cent theory, 70

Schoolteachers, 12, 29, 46

Self-appraisal, 88

Slave driving, 43, 160

"So what?" 27

Steppingstones, 88

Stimulus-response, 81

T

Tests, 2, 11, 80, 97

aptitude, 17, 85

army intelligence, 2

Trade journals, 50, 66

Trade schools, 66

V

Valence, 156

W

Weiss, M. J., 91

Westinghouse, 50

Willkie, Wendell L., 113

Wisconsin, 106

Worry, 143

Z

Zilch, 96